From the pages of *Batman Vol. 1: The Court of Owls*

TALON™

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DC

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TALON BY JAMES TYNION IV

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Introduction

The first and most important thing you should know is that I was terrified out of my mind.

I was 24 years old, coming off co-writing a few backup features in the main *Batman* title and the first *Batman Annual* of the New 52 era. I was working as a copywriter at a digital ad agency that didn't look like it was going to be around much longer. I was starting to think about going to graduate school. That's when the call came: The Batman group editor wanted to know if I had any interest in taking the core mythology of the Court of Owls, whose first story was still playing out in the pages of *Batman*, and building a new DC superhero out of the pieces. I'd be working side by side with my friend and mentor Scott Snyder, but DC wanted to see if I had the chops to step up and write more for the company.

I think my first pitch was filled with a few too many cute angles. A hat on a hat on a hat. It was about a kid who found a Talon in hibernation in her estranged father's basement, which catches the attention of the Court of Owls. The pitch was too focused on fleshing out the history of Gotham City in the 1970s at the expense of character and pathos. It was a whole world-building pitch. I remember Scott called me and sat me down and said that he was happy to back me if I was sure this was the right angle, but he wanted to ask me a very important question: What did this book *mean* to me? What personal nerve did it strike that I wanted to explore on the page, which could give other people a way into a comic? I didn't have answers to that question. I told Scott that I was scared. I felt in over my head. And Scott asked, What if I leaned in there?

So I did. Calvin Rose is an escape artist. Someone whose first move when he gets into a fight is trying to think his way out of it. He just wants an ordinary life and is so hopeful that it could actually be in his grasp that he lets himself become the pawn of the dynamic and mysterious Sebastian Clarke and his sinister machinations. Once I could feel the essence of Calvin, and I could feel what he was running from and what he hoped to run toward, the book started to come together in my mind...and it started teaching me how to write a James Tynion comic, rather than just mimicking Scott or any of the other comic book writers I grew up reading.

I usually point to issues #3 and #4 as the ones that did the trick. Before then, I was taking what I had learned writing the backup shorts and extrapolating it to full-length issues. This is where I figured out that I don't really enjoy writing books with a focus on a single character. I love having a big cast with multiple stories working in concert that you can cut in between to build tension and drama. Have enough threads going, and you always have the next scene in your pocket, ready to write. It's all a little messy, but you can see so many of my core fascinations at play here, some of which I wouldn't get back to in comics until years later. I love conspiracy thrillers, secret organizations, serial killers, and precocious children. (I also made plenty of mistakes. Let me apologize at the outset for how wordy some of these issues are. I'm very proud of the words inside the captions, but dang there are a *lot* of them.)

I adore the work Guillem March and Tomeu Morey did on this series. *Talon* was almost a full decade before the three of us would reunite in the pages of my *Batman* run. A standout design was the hulking Gotham Butcher, Felix Harmon. I remember the first time I saw Guillem draw him on panel. Pitting Harmon against Calvin Rose gave me my first taste of superhero action, the power of a hero facing their nemesis. When you're a young writer, you often overthink or try to divert away from the old story forms, so you can be taken off guard by the simple power of leaning into them. It's also worth pointing to the early days of my fascination with the intersection of the Court of Owls and Bane. I'd come back to that thread years later, in my *Joker* series, also with Guillem.

I still love this series and am so grateful whenever a reader brings me a copy to sign. I remember how scared I was at the beginning, and how harnessing that fear gave me the tools to build a real career in comics. I'll always be thankful to Scott Snyder and editors Mike Marts and Katie Kubert for giving me the chance to start my career.

I'm not quite as scared these days.

James Tynion IV
Brooklyn, New York
October 26, 2021

The only thing I truly remember from my childhood is the moment I knew I was going to die.

I was eight years old and my father had thrown me into an old dog kennel. Locked the gate and threw away the key. I would never see him again.

CHNK

The chain on the gate was old and rusty, and I hammered at it endlessly for three nights in the rain.

By the end of the third night, I knew it was hopeless. I couldn't stop shaking. Panic had overtaken me...I was ready to face my death...

...and suddenly, I saw the chain in a new light. I could see where it had chipped away. Where it was weakest.

I felt a sudden calm then, and knew I had the strength for one last blow.

CHN-KRAK

My first escape was a success, but it wasn't over and I knew it. I had to get as far away from that house and that kennel as my legs would carry me.

I needed to run.

NEW TRIGATE BRIDGE.
FIVE YEARS AGO...

I guess I never really stopped.

SPLOOSH

DAMN...

BOY, YOU DROP *ANOTHER* WRENCH?

HELL, IF I HADN'T DROPPED SIX OF THE DAMN THINGS LAST TIME WE WAS UP HERE, I'D PROBABLY BE PRETTY UPSET WITH YOU RIGHT NOW.

HOW 'BOUT THIS--I GOT A SIX-PACK STASHED IN THE TRUCK. I'LL SPLIT IT WITH YOU WHEN WE'RE DONE AND WE'LL CALL IT EVEN.

EVEN? I THINK EVEN CALLS FOR A FULL SET...

...HELL, YOU SEE THAT?

WHAT?

A *JUMPER*, LOOKS LIKE. I SHOULD CALL THE COPS...

THEY'D NEVER MAKE IT IN TIME.

LET ME CHECK IT OUT.

HEY! WAIT... YOU DON'T HAVE TO--

NO ..NOT HERE..

YES, MR. ROSE.

HERE.

ARGH!

SHINK

THERE YOU ARE...BLACKED OUT ON ME FOR A MINUTE.

I'M SURE YOU'RE WONDERING WHY I DIDN'T JUST SLIT YOUR THROAT. TRUTH IS, IT'D BE TOO EASY. TOO QUICK.

I'VE HEARD YOU THINK YOU'RE SOMETHING IMPRESSIVE. FRANKLY, I DOUBT IT.

YOU OF ALL PEOPLE SHOULD KNOW THAT YOU CAN'T RUN FROM A TALON FOREVER.

YOU MIGHT'VE HAD SOME TRICKS UP YOUR SLEEVE OR IN YOUR SHOES OR IN YOUR TOOL BELT, BUT I'VE TAKEN ALL THAT ***AWAY*** FROM YOU.

ROGER--?

YOUR FRIEND IS ***DEAD***. HE'LL BE TAKING THE TR.P DOWN INTO THE RIVER WITH YOU AND THE GENTLEMAN YOU MET A FEW MOMENTS AGO.

SUCH A NICE MAN...LETTING ME BORROW HIS CAR LIKE THIS.

JUST SAY THE DAMN LINE AND GET IT OVER WITH.

HEH... CALVIN ROSE...

SLAM

THE ***COURT OF OWLS*** HAS SENTENCED YOU TO ***DIE***.

The night I escaped the kennel, I ran until my legs gave out.

I was discovered by an old man, a performer at Haly's Circus, heading to his next show. He told me he was trained in the art of the escape.

He asked me what I wanted, so I told him.

HALY GRCU
PROUDLY PRESENTS
CALVIN ROSE
THE YOUNGEST ESCAPE ARTIST IN AMERICA

FLYING GRAYSONS

That summer I learned how to pick any standard lock you could throw at me. By age ten I knew fourteen ways to get out of a straitjacket.

By the time the old man passed away, I was performing his act in full.

By the time I was thirteen, I was set to be one of the star acts for the biggest show of the year, The Gotham City Spectacular.

But the night before the premiere, Mr. Haly came to me.

I was to give a private performance. I was meant to do my best. To impress this "very special" audience.

They hung me up as usual, but the lights were out.

I didn't panic until I realized I couldn't see my locks.

For the first time since the kennel, I felt trapped. But I couldn't let the fear win. I had to succeed. I needed to be free. I needed to escape.

Once again I found that perfect state of calm on the other end of panic.

The rest came easy.

A stranger approached, clapping.

I looked to Mr. Haly then, but all I could see in his face was sadness.

He knew that he had lost me in that moment, like the others before and the ones yet to come.

That night my life changed forever.

"BOY, WHAT DO YOU KNOW OF *OWLS?*"

UM. THEY EAT RATS.

HAH! YES. THEY *DO*, DON'T THEY?

WELL, CALVIN, LET ME TELL YOU SOMETHING...GOTHAM CITY HAS ALWAYS BEEN *INFESTED* WITH RATS.

NOT THE RODENT, MIND YOU...I'M TALKING ABOUT *PEOPLE*. EVIL PEOPLE.

THE KIND OF MEN AND WOMEN WHO ARE OUT THERE TO *DESTROY* EVERYTHING WE LOVE IN THIS WORLD.

YOU'VE SEEN EVIL LIKE THAT BEFORE, HAVEN'T YOU, CALVIN?

YES.

OUR ORGANIZATION HUNTS DOWN THE EVIL PEOPLE OF THE WORLD AND...*HEH*... EATS THEM. AS YOU SO ELOQUENTLY PUT IT.

WE KEEP THIS CITY CLEAN. WE KEEP IT SAFE.

WE KEEP IT *GREAT*.

BUT WE CAN'T DO IT ALONE, CALVIN.

I HEAR YOU ARE A VERY TALENTED BOY, WITH A VERY UNUSUAL SET OF SKILLS.

WILL YOU HELP US?

YES.

"IT WON'T BE EASY, CALVIN. I PROMISE YOU THAT. WE NEED YOU TO BE *PERFECT*.

"YOU'LL NEED TO BE ABLE TO SLIP PAST THE BEST SECURITY ON THE PLANET.

"TO OVERCOME ANY ENEMY YOU MIGHT FACE.

"AND TO LEAVE NO *TRACE* OF YOURSELF, WHEREVER YOU MIGHT BE.

"AND THEN, ONE DAY, WE'LL NEED YOU TO STEP UP AND BECOME OUR RIGHT HAND. OUR PRIVATE WEAPON FOR JUSTICE."

"OUR TALON."

NO! MASTERS, NO! I'M NOT READY! LET ME SERVE YOU LONGER... I'LL DO ANYTHING.

YOU'RE PATHETIC, OLD BIRD.

YOUR TIME AS A TALON HAS COME TO AN END. FACE IT WITH DIGNITY.

DIGNITY?!

THIS HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH DIGNITY, YOU STUPID KID...

UGK!

WHAT WOULD YOU HAVE ME DO?

NO! I WANT TO SEE.

REMOVE THE HOOD, AND RIP OUT HIS THROAT!

CLOSE YOUR EYES NOW, LITTLE ONE.

SLICE

YOU HAVE PASSED THE FIRST TRIAL OF THE LABYRINTH. NOW YOU FACE THE SECOND. YOU WON'T BE RELEASED UNTIL YOU ARE READY TO REPLACE THE MAN YOU'VE KILLED.

YOU WILL STARVE... GO MAD... AND IN DOING SO, PROVE YOUR DEVOTION TO US. YOU HAVE IMPRESSED US SO FAR, MR. ROSE. DON'T STOP JUST YET.

I felt sick...not from the stench, but from what I had done. I tried not to think about it, but the longer I looked at that poor man's corpse...

...the more sure I was... that I had let them transform me into a monster.

I needed to do something to keep my mind clear. I needed to get as far away from the body as I could. I started moving.

Tracing my way back to where they had inserted me into the maze...

...the Court was shocked to find me the next evening, back in their secret meeting place.

No one had ever escaped The Labyrinth before. They didn't know it was possible. No one was sure what to do until the Grandmaster laughed.

He congratulated me, then. Said I was ready.

Ready to become their TALON.

But all I could see was the face of the man I had just killed. And the faces of the ones they'd send me for next.

For the first time in my life since my father threw me into that wet, dark cage, I knew deep down...

...there was no way out.

Of course, now I know different. There's always a way out.

SPLASH

When I was a child, Mr. Haly would tell me stories about Houdini. I never listened as closely as I should have...

"...but one thing always stuck with me. Houdini hid a lockpick in the calloused skin on the bottom of his foot. Always seemed like a great idea.

CLIK

During my training, the Court had told me it was unusual for them to pick an escape artist. They had preferred a more aggressive skill set in the past.

But now they needed someone who could slip in through the most advanced security systems on the planet, and slip out just as easily.

I was relieved my first target allowed me to use these skills. It gave me something to keep my focus on, so I could forget what they had sent me there to do.

Securitus CEO Eric Washington's apartment was known as the safest private residence in the country.

Washington lived with the constant fear that he was being hunted. That fear fueled him to create the best security products on the planet.

Up until his recent passing, he kept a team of twelve ex-military specialists guarding the apartment at any given moment.

The newspapers called him paranoid.

They were wrong.

After his death, the company and all his patents went to his twenty-three-year-old daughter, Casey, much to the chagrin of his silent investors.

I was instructed to ensure that the Washington bloodline ended that night. My first task as the weapon of the Court.

The blade weighed heavily in my hand, but I knew my duty. I had killed the Talon, and I would kill the woman, and kill whoever they sent me after next.

Until it stopped hurting.

That's what I was telling myself anyway, until I looked through that door and understood why they hadn't specified Casey.

Why they had said I needed to end the bloodline.

Her name was **Sarah Washington.** She was two years old.

I couldn't breathe. I felt dizzy. Nauseated.

The woman and her child in that room had done nothing wrong. They were not the rats I was promised.

To go through with this, I would become something terrible. But what else could I do? I felt the world closing in on me. I felt trapped.

WHAT THE *HELL* IS THIS?!

GET OUT OF MY HOUSE!

The decision came quick.

There was no time for explanations. No time for subtlety.

I'd later think of a dozen better ways I could have gotten them out of that apartment. Casey would inform me of a few dozen more.

But I knew it wouldn't take long for **The Court** to realize what had happened. They would use all their resources to track us down and eliminate us.

They would be relentless. But I couldn't let them have her or her daughter... I couldn't allow their innocent blood to be spilled in my name.

There was only one thing left to do... the one thing I'd been trained to do since I was a boy. The only thing I've ever really known how to do...

...I had to **escape.**

SMACK

NOW I'LL ONLY ASK THIS *ONCE*.

WHERE THE HELL ARE MY PANTS?

HEH HEH HEH... I SEE WHY THEY LIKE YOU SO MUCH, ROSE.

LIKE ME ENOUGH TO *KILL* ME, YOU MEAN.

DID YOU REALLY THINK THIS WAS ABOUT KILLING YOU, CALVIN? ARE YOU REALLY THAT *NAIVE?*

THEIR ORDERS WERE SIMPLE. THEY WANT YOU BACK IN THEIR CUSTODY, LIVING OR DEAD.

YOUR WORK FOR THE COURT IS *FAR* FROM OVER.

HOW THE HELL WAS I SUPPOSED TO *HELP*, GUTTED AT THE BOTTOM OF THE RIVER?

THE CAR WAS MY IDEA... NEEDED TO SEE FOR MYSELF WHY THEY STILL FIND YOU SO VALUABLE.

AND HELL, WHY NOT ADD A LITTLE EXTRA FUN TO THE EQUATION WITH A STABBING?

YEAH. THAT WAS *LOTS* OF FUN.

YOU SHOULD HEAR THEM TALK NOW. THEY HAVE PLANS. BIG PLANS.

THEY'LL RAISE YOU WITH THE REST AND BREAK YOU TO THEIR WILL.

YOU SEE... THE POWER OF THE COURT EXTENDS FAR BEYOND THE VEIL OF DEATH.

YOU REALLY THINK YOU'RE FREE, DON'T YOU?

YOU'RE AN IDIOT, CALVIN. MASTER ALL THE LOCKS AND KEYS OF THE WORLD AND YOU'LL NEVER ESCAPE OUR GRASP.

THAT SURE AS HELL WON'T STOP ME FROM TRYING, NOW... WILL IT?

Five long years before I learned the truth behind what that Talon had said to me that night. Five long years of terror, and doubt.

But I always found my calm. Always lived to see another sunrise.

There's a part of me that won't let me give up. Won't let me stop running.

It's been a part of me for as long as I can remember.

It's who I am...

...I am an Escape Artist. I am a man on the run.

And like it or not, I am and will always be a TALON.

My name is Calvin Rose.

This is my story.

DC COMICS PRESENTS BEFORE THE NEW 52

THE TALON IN THE LONG RUN

Plot by James Tynion IV and Scott Snyder

Written by James Tynion IV Art by Guillem March

Colored by Tomeu Morey Lettered by Sal Cipriano

Cover by Guillem March Assistant Editor: Katie Kubert

Editor: Mike Marts

I was thirteen years old when **The Court of Owls** first took me to the **Metropolitan Terminal**, the abandoned train station on the edge of Gotham.

As we walked into the building, brushing off the cobwebs, they told me the story of its former glory.

The Court had built the Metropolitan in the late 1800s to control those who would come to and leave their city.

Targets would think themselves on the verge of freedom only to be snatched up through the ceilings of the train cars when they tried to leave.

Within a few decades, Alan Wayne's **Union Station** would make the Metropolitan obsolete, and it would eventually close its doors.

As they led me into the dark, secret heart of the station, I wondered why they would tell me of failure on this grand a scale.

I saw the truth in room after room of maps and photos. The secrets of every Gothamite that ever crossed their path.

The true nature of their power wasn't an assassin in a train car, it was Gotham itself. They had built the city into a **trap** no one could ever escape.

This was meant to make me feel like I was part of something greater. But it would take on a different meaning the moment I decided to run.

My name is **Calvin Rose.** I was once The Court of Owls' most powerful assassin...their **Talon.**

And if there's one thing I've learned, it's that if you're going to spring a trap...

...you're going to have to come at it from a different angle.

I've spent the last seven years thinking that I'd never be able to set foot in Gotham again. That doing so would be suicide.

Even now, I can feel my hands shaking. I can feel the fear welling up in my chest.

I know that I am probably diving towards my death.

But I have to know for sure whether the reports were true.

The papers called it "The Night of the Owls."

Dozens of Talon assassins struck Gotham City officials simultaneously in a show of force.

CLIK

TALON IN THE GOTHAM TRAP

Plot by Scott Snyder & James Tynion IV
Written by James Tynion IV
Art & Cover by Guillem March
Colored by Tomeu Morey
Lettered by Sal Cipriano
Assistant Editor Katie Kubert
Editor Mike Marts

Some succeeded, but the majority were defeated by The Batman.

The next morning, twenty-four prominent businessmen were found dead wearing owl masks in one of the oldest private social clubs in Gotham City.

The Court of Owls was uncovered and defeated, and I saw the possibility of true freedom dangling in front of me.

But I know I can't afford that kind of optimism. Even with no life signs within, I feel the Court reaching out through Gotham's dark history.

It takes all my willpower just to open the back door.

I half expected them to find a way around my infrared. That one of their undead killers would be waiting for me.

But the room seems long abandoned.

HRMM...

All I need to do is slip into their central computer terminal and see for sure that all network activity has ceased...

...then, for the first time in seven years, I'll breathe easy.

Because then I'll know I'm free.

HMM... THIS IS NEW.

PROCESSING...

DESIGNATED CALVIN ROSE. ACCESS LIMITED. CROSS-SYSTEM ALERT...

ACROSS TOWN...

HM?

PRIORITY MESSAGE INTERC

CROSS-SYST ALERT. CA ROSE DISC IN BAS

THAT DAMN FOOL...

C'MON. DON'T PANIC. ALMOST...

"...HE'S GOING TO GET HIMSELF *KILLED.*"

THERE!

KRK

I SUPPOSE I SHOULD THANK YOU...

I HAVEN'T YET MASTERED THESE DAMNED ELECTRIC DOORS.

UFF

NO...

...THE PAPERS SAID THEY LOCKED YOU ALL UP IN *BLACKGATE.*

YOU ARE A FOOL. DO YOU REALLY THINK THEY COULD CAPTURE US ALL AFTER WHAT WE'VE BECOME?

THE COURT HAS MADE US STRONGER!

FASTER

AND UNSTOPPABLE.

AND YOU...YOU'RE THE WAYWARD SHEEP. CALVIN ROSE, THE ESCAPE ARTIST. THE ONE WHO LOST HIS WAY.

LET ME SLIT YOUR THROAT, AND PERHAPS THEY'LL LET YOU RETURN AS SOMETHING **BETTER** THAN THE PATHETIC LITTLE MAN I SEE HERE TODAY.

NOT THAT I DON'T APPRECIATE THE OFFER...BUT I THINK I'M GOING TO *PASS.*

PSSSHH

Well, like it or not, I have my answer. I should have known this city would never be safe. There's no need to stick around for clarification.

The only thing left to do is get as far away from here as possible...

SMASH

...or die trying.

YOU'RE GOING TO WANT TO BE *VERY CAREFUL*... THAT'S HIGH TENSILE WIRE, VIRTUALLY *IMPOSSIBLE* TO CUT.

THE NOOSE TIGHTENS, BUT IT WON'T RETRACT. MOVE TOO FAR, TOO FAST, AND YOU'RE GOING TO SLICE YOUR *HEAD* RIGHT OFF.

I'M SURE YOU'LL FIGURE IT OUT, BUT NOT UNTIL I'M LONG GONE.

YOU FILTHY COWARD...

YEAH, I KNOW. I SUCK. SORRY ABOUT THAT.

Back in the Metropolitan's earliest days, there was a gargantuan fireplace in the central terminal they would light all winter.

The chimney chute ran straight up to the roof, through the entire structure, including the secret floors tucked away within the building.

It's been sealed off for over a century...on both ends. .

This is absolutely going to hurt.

SMASH

-KOFF-

SHIFF

HM?

YOU'RE NOT ABOUT TO GET AWAY THAT EASY, MR. ROSE.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO DO THIS...

HAH! YOU IDIOT CHILD... I WANT TO DO THIS.

YOU KNOW WHAT? FINE. LET'S GET THIS OVER WITH!

HEH...DID YOU REALLY THINK THAT WAS GOING TO WORK?

NAH...BUT IT DISTRACTED YOU ENOUGH SO I COULD SWIPE YOUR KNIFE.

ARGHH!

I'M SURE IT'LL HEAL QUICKLY, BUT I DOUBT YOU CAN HOLD THAT THING WITHOUT THE *TENDONS* IN YOUR HAND.

I DON'T NEED A DAGGER TO KILL YOU, ROSE.

CRAK

HEAR THAT? THAT WAS ONE OF YOUR RIBS.

SHUNK

YEAH, WELL THIS IS YOUR *FREAKING HEAD!*

WHAT PART OF UNSTOPPABLE DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND?

WELL, I'M PRETTY CURIOUS ABOUT *THIS* PART, TO BE HONEST.

UNF

YOU DID WELL, BOY. BUT THAT WON'T *KILL* HER.

WASN'T TRYING TO... JUST WANTED TO SHUT HER BRAIN DOWN LONG ENOUGH TO GET AWAY...

COLD'S THE ONLY THING THAT'LL SHUT THESE MONSTERS DOWN FOR GOOD. LIQUID NITROGEN TO THE HEAD SHOULD DO THE TRICK...

WHO ARE YOU...?

A FRIEND, CALVIN...

...I'M A *FRIEND.*

C'MON, BOY... IT'S BEEN EIGHTEEN HOURS. TIME TO WAKE UP.

THERE YOU GO...

IT'S TIME YOU AND I HAD A LITTLE CONVERSATION.

STAY BACK!

YOU'RE JUST AS IMPRESSIVE AS I'VE HEARD.

BUT I THINK YOU'LL FIND *NOTHING* AT THE END OF THAT VENT BUT AN INDUSTRIAL AIR CONDITIONER.

IT'S A CLOSED SYSTEM. NO WAY TO GET OUT.

IF I WANTED TO KILL YOU, I WOULD HAVE LEFT YOU BROKEN AT THE METROPOLITAN FOR THE *OWLS* TO FIND YOU.

LOOK, I THOUGHT THEY WERE DONE FOR. OBVIOUSLY, I WAS WRONG.

NEED TO GET THE HELL OUT OF THE CITY BEFORE THEY KILL ME.

THE OWLS MIGHT NOT BE GONE, BUT THEY'RE *WEAK*, CALVIN.

NOW COME DOWN HERE. YOU AND I HAVE A *LOT* TO DISCUSS.

ALL RIGHT, THAT'S *ENOUGH*.

WHO THE *HELL* ARE YOU? AND HOW THE *HELL* DO YOU KNOW MY *NAME*?!

GET OFF ME . AND I'LL TELL YOU.

SAVE A MAN'S LIFE, AND HE THROWS A TABLE AT YOU... TRIES TO KILL YOU...

I DON'T KILL PEOPLE. I JUST WANTED--

YOU WANTED TO BE *FREE*. THAT'S ALL YOU'VE *EVER* WANTED, ISN'T IT, CALVIN?

I'M NOT DOING ANYTHING UNTIL YOU TELL ME WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON HERE.

MY NAME IS *SEBASTIAN CLARK*, AND TOGETHER, WE'RE GOING TO WIPE THE COURT OF OWLS FROM THE FACE OF THE EARTH.

WHAT IF I TOLD YOU I COULD *HELP* YOU MAKE THAT HAPPEN?

...

WHAT MAKES YOU SO CERTAIN I'M INTERESTED?

YOU AND I, WE'RE THE *SAME*, CALVIN... WHEN I WAS A YOUNG MAN, THE COURT TOOK EVERYTHING AWAY FROM ME, AND I RAN.

YOU KNOW A LITTLE SOMETHING ABOUT *RUNNING*, DON'T YOU, BOY? HAVEN'T YOU EVER DREAMED ABOUT *VENGEANCE*?

YOU'RE THE ONE WHO SEEMS TO KNOW EVERYTHING. WHY DON'T YOU TELL ME?

PLAY DEFENSIVE ALL YOU WANT, BUT I KNOW YOU'RE CURIOUS.

WHY THE HELL SHOULD I *BELIEVE* ANY OF THIS?

PERHAPS *THIS* WILL HELP YOU UNDERSTAND...

...YOU SEE, MY FATHER WAS A WRITER

HE WORKED IN SECRET FOR YEARS ON HIS *MASTERPIECE*... THE BOOK THAT WOULD CHANGE THE COURSE OF MY ENTIRE LIFE.

MY GOD..

NO GOTHAM PUBLISHER WOULD TOUCH IT. WHEN THE COURT LEARNED THE TRUTH, IT WAS BEING PRINTED ON A SMALL PRESS THREE STATES AWAY.

THE SECRET HISTORY OF THE COURT OF OWLS

THE TRUTH BEHIND GOTHAM'S MOST FRIGHTENING FOLK TALE

ERASTUS CLA

AS YOU CAN IMAGINE, THE COURT *KILLED* EVERYONE WHO EVER HEARD OF IT.

I WAS THE *ONLY* ONE WHO SLIPPED THROUGH THEIR GRASP.

I BUILT A NEW LIFE FOR MYSELF IN EUROPE, WITH A NEW NAME. AND I BEGAN TO PLOT MY REVENGE.

WHEN I RETURNED TO GOTHAM, I CAME WITH PROPRIETARY COMPUTER SECURITY SOFTWARE THAT RIVALED ANYTHING ELSE ON THE PLANET.

I SOLD IT TO THE DESCENDANTS OF THE PEOPLE WHOSE NAMES WERE IN MY FATHER'S BOOK...

...KNOWING ONE OF THEM WOULD LEAD ME TO WHAT I WANTED...

CLIK

THROUGH THESE CONNECTIONS, I KNOW MORE ABOUT THE COURT OF OWLS THAN ANY MAN ALIVE. I FOLLOWED YOUR TRAINING AND YOUR ESCAPE FROM THESE VERY COMPUTERS.

LOOK, I'M IMPRESSED. BUT THE COURT OF OWLS--

HAVEN'T GONE ANYWHERE. THAT'S WHAT I'M TRYING TO *TELL* YOU, CALVIN. THE COURT OF OWLS IS STILL OUT THERE... *HEALING.*

THE BATMAN HIT THEM *HARD*. THEY HAVEN'T HAD MORE THAN TWO MEMBERS IN THE SAME BUILDING SINCE THEY LOST HARBOR HOUSE...

...THEIR COFFERS WERE EMPTIED BY A RENEGADE MEMBER, WHO HAS SINCE VANISHED.

OUT OF THE FORTY-SIX TALONS THEY RESURRECTED, THIRTY HAVE BEEN APPREHENDED AND LOCKED AWAY IN BLACKGATE.

SO THEY'RE RUNNING SCARED.

DON'T BE AN IDIOT, CALVIN. *THINK.*

FOR CENTURIES, THE COURT OF OWLS HAS WIELDED TREMENDOUS POWER WITH ONLY *ONE*, COMPLETELY *HUMAN*, TALON. NOW THEY HAVE *SIXTEEN* THAT I KNOW OF.

AND THEY ARE *FAR* FROM HUMAN.

THESE UNSTOPPABLE TALONS HAVE BEEN DISPERSED ACROSS THE COUNTRY, TO PROTECT AND ENSURE THAT THEY RETAIN THE ASSETS THAT SUPPORTED THEM YEAR AFTER YEAR...

...I'VE ALREADY DETERMINED SEVERAL OF THESE ASSETS. IN TIME, THEY WILL GIVE THEM THE POWER TO TAKE BACK GOTHAM CITY.

IF WE ELIMINATE THEIR RESOURCES AND NEUTRALIZE THEIR TALONS, THEY WILL BE *FINISHED!*

I CAN'T DO THIS *ALONE*, CALVIN. I'VE KNOWN FOR WEEKS THAT THIS WAS THE TIME TO STRIKE, BUT UNTIL *YOU* RETURNED, I DIDN'T KNOW HOW.

THEY RIPPED YOUR LIFE AWAY FROM YOU. AND NOW YOU CAN BECOME EVERYTHING THEY TRAINED YOU TO BE, TURNED *AGAINST* THEM...

...THE COURT OF OWLS *RIPPED APART* BY ONE OF ITS *OWN TALONS!*

I'M SORRY, OLD MAN. I CAN'T DO THIS.

YOU MADE YOUR CHOICE THE SECOND YOU CAME BACK TO GOTHAM. THEIR *TRAP* HAS BEEN SET, CALVIN, LIKE IT OR NOT.

YOU'VE BEEN OFF THEIR RADAR FOR SO LONG, YOU PROBABLY COULD HAVE RUN FOREVER. *NOW* THEY HAVE YOUR TRAIL, AND THE FIREPOWER TO TAKE YOU BACK.

YOU THINK THIS IS NEWS TO ME? THEY'VE WANTED TO KILL ME FOR YEARS!

KILL YOU? YOU THINK THAT'S ALL THEY WANT?! THEY'LL STRIKE YOU DOWN AND BRING YOU BACK AS ONE OF ***THEM.*** YOU'LL BE THEIR SLAVE, CALVIN.

AND THIS ISN'T JUST ABOUT YOU. THE WOMAN YOU LEFT THE COURT TO PROTECT...

CASEY WASHINGTON. THEY'VE DISCOVERED HER LOCATION.

THE SECOND THEY REGAIN THEIR FOOTING, THEY'LL KILL THE GIRL AND HER ***DAUGHTER.*** EVERY PERSON WHOSE LIFE YOU'VE TOUCHED IS IN GRAVE DANGER UNLESS YOU JOIN MY SIDE AND ***FIGHT.***

ARE YOU TRYING TO ***THREATEN*** ME?

NO. I'M REMINDING YOU WHAT YOU'RE RUNNING FROM. IN SIX MONTHS, EITHER THEY'LL BE STRONGER THAN THEY EVER WERE...

...OR THEY'LL BE GONE. ***FOREVER.***

NO ONE ELSE CAN DO THIS, CALVIN. NO ONE ELSE HAS THE SKILLS OR THE KNOWLEDGE. THERE'S ONLY ***YOU.***

IS THAT WHAT I THINK IT IS?

YES. I REMADE IT BASED ON THE SPECIFICATIONS FROM THE COURT DATABASE. I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE POETIC, SOMEHOW, TO PUT IT BACK IN USE.

IT'S MORE THAN IT WAS BEFORE. I TOOK THE LIBERTY OF MAKING SOME ***IMPROVEMENTS*** WHILE YOU WERE UNDER.

SEE HOW IT FEELS. AND THINK OF HOW THIS ALL CHANGES IF YOU WALK OUT THAT DOOR.

THINK OF A SERIES OF VIRTUALLY ***UNSTOPPABLE ASSASSINS*** HUNTING YOU SIMULTANEOUSLY FOR THE REST OF YOUR LIFE.

TURNING EVERY CITY YOU ENTER INTO ANOTHER ***TRAP*** YOU MIGHT NEVER ESCAPE.

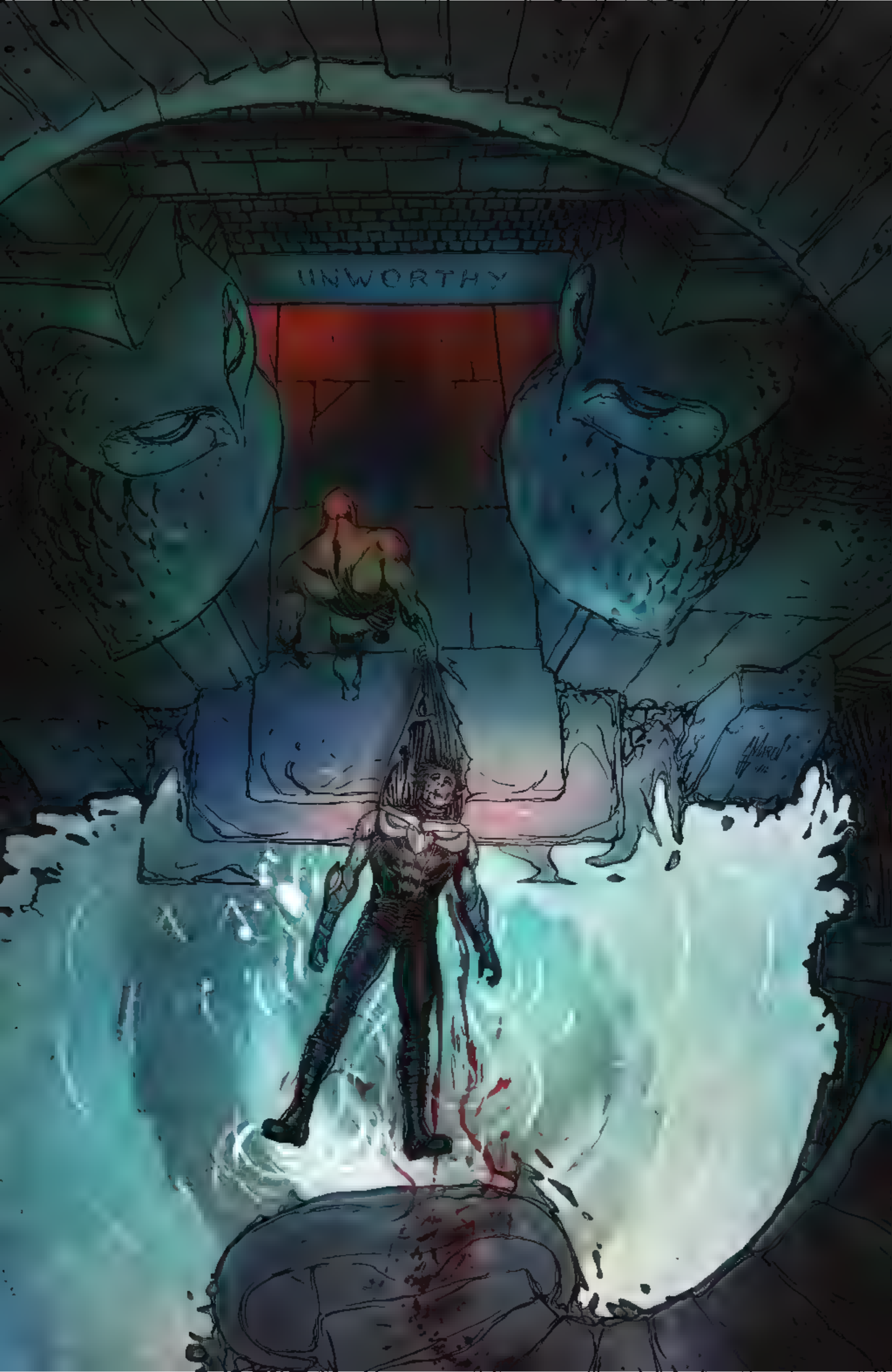
THINK OF ***CASEY'S BLOOD*** ON YOUR HANDS...AND HER PRETTY LITTLE DAUGHTER TORN INTO PRETTY LITTLE PIECES...

...JUST TO DRAW YOU OUT OF THE SHADOWS.

I'M DONE THINKING, CLARK.

WHAT WAS IT YOU SAID? R.PPED APART BY ONE OF THEIR *OWN TALONS...?*

WHERE DO WE START?


UNWORTHY

The Orchard Hotel was founded in 1893 by R.H. Orchard to offer the height of luxury to anyone who could afford to spend the night.

To the average Gothamite, it seems like any other upscale hotel.

But tucked away in the heart of the building is one of the keys to the Court of Owls' perpetual wealth and power in Gotham City.

THE ORCHARD HOTEL

Several days ago, I agreed to help Sebastian Clark dismantle the Court of Owls.

He said this was the perfect place to start.

Not only is The Orchard the Court's greatest horde of wealth on the continent, it's also where they've secreted away their files on me.

Everything they've compiled since I abandoned my post as a Talon, seven years ago.

Those files hold the secret location of Casey and Sarah Washington, two people I would give my life to protect.

With Sebastian Clark by my side, I shouldn't have to pay that price.

With all his planning and resources, this should be easy.

Key word being "should."

YOU TOLD ME YOU HAD THIS *UNDER CONTROL!* I KNEW THIS WOULD HAPPEN, CLARK.

I DO HAVE THIS UNDER CONTROL, CALVIN. JUST ANOTHER FEW SECONDS... REMEMBER. YOUR TARGET IS TWENTY-FIVE FEET IN FRONT OF YOU.

THE TALON IN FIRST STRIKE

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YEAH, YEAH. CORRIDOR BELOW CLEAR?

THE GUARDS CAME THROUGH TEN MINUTES AGO, SHOULD BE ANOTHER TWENTY BEFORE THEY MAKE THEIR WAY BACK.

YOU SURE ABOUT THAT?

I never dreamed of going head-to-head with the Court. I knew it would be suicide. I still know it.

Particularly by working for someone with no field experience.

Sometimes guards get bored. They change up their routine just to keep themselves from going crazy.

I've known that for years, but Sebastian is just discovering it tonight.

His years of working on high-end computer security programs haven't prepared him for the live-action side of things.

Thankfully, this whole infrastructure is so well insulated that a little gunfire can't wake the people sleeping just one-hundred feet away.

The only thing we have to worry about is keeping these guys from sounding the alarms.

WELCOME TO EDEN, CALVIN-- THE MOST EXCLUSIVE STORE IN NORTH AMERICA. IT TAKES FIVE YEARS TO GET A MEMBERSH--

YOU'VE BEEN BRIEFING ME FOR A WEEK. I KNOW. LET'S GET IT OVER WITH.

...

ATTACH THE DEVICE I GAVE YOU AND STEP BACK... THIS COULD TAKE A WHILE.

DID YOU HEAR ME, CALVIN? ATTACH THE--

WE DON'T HAVE TIME FOR YOUR PLAN, CLARK. THERE'S NO PLACE TO HIDE. WE NEED TO GET IN AND OUT. FAST.

SOMETIMES THE SIMPLEST WAY IN IS THE BEST. TAKE IT FROM SOMEONE WHO'S BEEN DOING THIS FOR A LONG, LONG TIME.

WAIT... CALVIN, WHAT THE HELL DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING?!

I'M GETTING US IN. NOW.

KLK KLK KLK

YOU IDIOT!

THE INTERNAL SYSTEM DOESN'T ACTIVATE UNTIL ONE OF THOSE KEYS IS USED. WE COULD HAVE SLIPPED IN COMPLETELY UNNOTICED!

YOU SHOULD HAVE SAID--

WE SPENT THE LAST WEEK TALKING ABOUT USING THE UNLOCKING DEVICE! I DIDN'T THINK YOU'D GO OFF BOOK IN THE LAST MINUTE!

TAKE A LOOK AT WHAT'S AT STAKE HERE, KID. ANY ONE OF THOSE TABLES COULD FUND THE COURT FOR ANOTHER YEAR. MAYBE LONGER. THAT'S WHY WE'RE HERE.

THAT'S WHY ***YOU'RE*** HERE, CLARK. I'M HERE TO DESTROY EVERYTHING THEY HAVE ON ME AND MY FRIENDS.

YOU NEED TO STOP SECOND-GUESSING ME AND START LISTENING TO ORDERS!

GET OUT OF SIGHT ***IMMEDIATELY*** AND STAY QUIET. HE'S COMING.

Ever since their defeat, The Court of Owls has been safeguarding their assets. Protecting themselves with one of their **Talons.**

For centuries, one assassin was all they needed to maintain their strength. But a few months ago, they resurrected them **all.**

These resurrected killers are stronger than any human, can recover from any wound and are impervious to pain.

Thanks to being alive and all, I missed out on that upgrade, putting me at a distinct **disadvantage.**

But I can postpone the inevitable with a little **misdirection.**

I came up with the idea for this sonic gun three years ago. It only took Sebastian **a week** to build it.

It can throw a helpful sound effect hundreds of feet away.

CLINK

Allowing me to slip right under the enemy's nose.

Simple, but effective.

HEAD TOWARDS THE TREE... THAT'S WHERE THEY'LL BE HIDING YOUR FILE.

THIS IS DISGUSTING.

THAT'S WHO WE'RE FACING HERE. DISGUSTING IS BARELY THE START OF IT.

IF YOU COULD SEE THE FULL EXTENT OF THE COURT'S HORRORS, YOU'D BE DOING THIS OUT OF SHEER RIGHTEOUSNESS AND NOT JUST FOR SOME GIRL.

I DON'T NEED A LECTURE ABOUT MY MOTIVES.

THE HELL YOU DON'T! YOU KNOW THESE PEOPLE, CALVIN. YOU'RE WELL AWARE OF WHAT THEY'RE CAPABLE OF.

TAKE A LITTLE PRIDE IN THE FACT YOU'RE DOING THE RIGHT THING HERE! WHO THE HELL ARE THESE WASHINGTON GIRLS TO YOU, ANYWAY?

THAT'S NONE OF YOUR BUS NESS. I SAID THAT I WOULD HELP YOU DESTROY THE COURT, AND I'M NOT GOING BACK ON THAT PROMISE.

AFTER TONIGHT SHE'LL BE SAFE... ***BOTH*** OF THEM WILL, AND THEN YOU WON'T EVER HAVE TO HEAR ME TALK ABOUT THEM AGAIN. OKAY?

GOOD.

LET'S GET THIS OVER WITH, THEN.

CRASH

HRRRM.

HSSSS

WE'RE IN.

THIS WAS THE PERSONAL OFFICE OF R.H. ORCHARD... IT'S MY UNDERSTANDING THAT IT HASN'T BEEN USED IN YEARS, ASIDE FROM STORING PRECIOUS ITEMS AND PAPERS.

ALL I KNOW IS YOU'RE LOOKING FOR A SAFE... I HAVE THE ORIGINAL BILL OF SALE FROM THE COURT DATABASE, BUT NOTHING TO SAY WHERE IT WOULD BE.

IT'S A CUSTOM PIECE. DESIGNED BY LEE MARKAND WHEN THEY FIRST BUILT EDEN.

SERIOUSLY?

I'VE BEEN READING ABOUT LEE MARKAND'S LOCKS AND PUZZLES SINCE I WAS A KID...

NEVER SAW ONE IN PERSON BEFORE...

...HE TENDED TO BUILD HIS PUZZLES RIGHT INTO THE STRUCTURES OF THE ROOM. IT'S WHY SO FEW HAVE EVER BEEN DISPLAYED. YOU CAN'T TRANSPORT THEM.

THERE...

RIGHT UNDER OUR NOSES.

AND HOW DO WE OPEN IT?

HMM... LET'S SEE.

CLICK

CLICK CLICK

THERE.

HEH. WELL DONE, BOY.

POP

WAIT--WHAT THE HELL IS *THIS?* WHERE'S THE FILE?

I... I DON'T KNOW, CALVIN.

ARE YOU TELLING ME WE CAME ALL THIS WAY FOR A *MASK?!*

IT'S NOT JUST A MASK, CALVIN ROSE. IT'S THE MASK OF THE GRANDMASTERS.

THE MAN WHO FORMED THE COURT OF OWLS FORGED IT FROM THE PUREST GOLD.

IT HAS BEEN PASSED DOWN FROM LEADER TO LEADER FOR GENERATIONS... THE SYMBOL OF ULTIMATE AUTHORITY OVER THE COURT AND ITS RESOURCES.

AND IT DOES NOT BELONG TO YOU!

CRAAASH

WHERE THE *HELL* ARE YOU HIDING IT? WHERE'S THE INFORMATION YOU BASTARDS HAVE ON ME?

I NEITHER KNOW NOR CARE WHO YOU ARE, BROTHER, BEYOND BEING A RENEGADE TALON. AND A THIEF.

MY NAME IS BENJAMIN ORCHARD. MY FATHER WORE THIS MASK WHEN HE BUILT HIS HOTEL AND EDEN WITHIN IT.

THIS MASK... THIS STORE... THIS BUILDING IS ALL MY BIRTH-RIGHT. I WON'T LET YOU TAKE IT FROM ME.

A COURT GRANDMASTER WOULD NEVER ALLOW HIS *SON* TO BECOME A TALON.

YOU NEVER MET MY FATHER

I CAME OF AGE IN THE DEPRESSION. I THOUGHT THE ORCHARD WAS A FAILED LEGACY THAT WOULD BRING ME DOWN WITH IT.

SO I RAN AWAY TO THE CIRCUS.

AFTER SOME TIME, THE COURT OFFERED ME A CHANCE FOR A NEW KIND OF DESTINY.

BUT WHEN THEIR LEADER STEPPED OUT OF THE SHADOWS, I RECOGNIZED THE GOLDEN PIN ON HIS CHEST.

MY FATHER TOLD ME THAT SINCE I HAD REJECTED HIS LEGACY, I WOULD LIVE A SHADOW LIFE...LIKE A DOG, DOING HIS BIDDING.

I WOULD KILL FOR HIM UNTIL HE WAS BORED WITH ME...AND THEN HE WOULD THROW ME AWAY.

HE ONLY LET ME SERVE AS TALON FOR A YEAR...AND HE LAUGHED AS MY REPLACEMENT SLIT MY THROAT DOWN IN THE SHADOWS OF THE LABYRINTH.

BUT NOW, I CAN BE WHAT I WAS ALWAYS MEANT TO BE...AFTER KILLING YOU, I'LL LIVE ON. I'LL WATCH OVER THIS PLACE GENERATION AFTER GENERATION.

LET THE COURT TRY AND TAKE IT AWAY FROM ME. I'LL KILL THEM ALL IF THEY DARE.

I AM AN ORCHARD, AND ALL OF THIS IS RIGHTFULLY MINE.

WITH THIS NEW STRENGTH BESTOWED UPON ME, I WILL BE PART OF THIS BUILDING AND MY FATHER'S LEGACY FOREVER.

THOSE GUARDS, ARE THEY CLEAR?

WHA--

I'M NOT TALKING TO YOU.

CLARK, YOU THERE?

...

THEY'RE OUT OF RANGE. MUST HAVE GONE TO RAISE THE ALARM.

WHO ARE YOU TALKING--

LOOK, I FEEL SORRY FOR YOU, BENJAMIN, I DO...

...BUT I DIDN'T SPEND THREE HOURS CLIMBING THROUGH THE WALLS OF THIS PLACE FOR NOTHING.

CLIK

NO...NO... NO!

THOSE INCENDIARY BOMBS WILL TURN THIS PLACE INTO AN OVEN.

EVERYTHING WILL BURN AND MELT TOGETHER, SEALING THIS CHAMBER OFF, PERMANENTLY.

THE COURT WOULD HAVE TO DEMOLISH THE BUILDING TO CRACK EDEN OPEN AGAIN, AND THEY DON'T HAVE THE RESOURCES TO DO IT.

EDEN IS OVER.

LOOK, BENJAMIN.. I KNOW HOW DEEP THE WOUNDS ARE. I HAVE MY OWN.

THE COURT FINDS FRIGHTENED CHILDREN LIKE US AND TRANSFORMS THEM INTO *MONSTERS.*

BUT WE *CAN'T* LET THEM WIN. WE CAN'T JUST KEEP SUCCUMBING TO THE FEAR. THERE'S ANOTHER WAY. A WAY TO FORGE YOUR *OWN* LEGACY.

COME WITH ME AND *FIGHT.*

HELP ME *END THEM,* BENJAMIN. THE COURT OF OWLS HAS RULED THIS CITY FOR FAR TOO LONG AND RUINED FAR TOO MANY LIVES.

WHAT ARE YOU DOING? GET THAT MASK AND GET OUT OF THERE!

QUIET, CLARK.

NO... I CAN'T.

MY PLACE IS HERE IN THE ORCHARD. THIS IS WHERE I BELONG.

DIDN'T YOU HEAR ME?

THE TEMPERATURES ARE RISING...EVEN WITH YOUR REGENERATION, YOU CAN'T SURVIVE ANOTHER FEW MINUTES IN HERE.

AND YOU'LL DIE MUCH SOONER THAN HE WILL, CALVIN! GET THE HELL OUT, NOW.

I'M NOT LEAVING. IF YOU TRY TO TAKE ME, I'LL FIGHT YOU UNTIL WE'RE BOTH IN FLAMES.

CALVIN! YOU HAVE TO GET OUT NOW!

SEE FATHER?

SSSSSSS

NOW I'LL ALWAYS BE A PART OF-- HSSSS

"WHAT THE *HELL* WERE YOU THINKING?!"

DID YOU THINK I WOULD JUST LET ONE OF THOSE *MONSTERS* WALK RIGHT INTO *THIS BASE?* THAT I WOULD *WELCOME* HIM WITH OPEN ARMS AND INTRODUCE MYSELF?!

YOU HAD A *CLEAR MISSION.* GET THE CONTENTS OF THE SAFE, BLOW THE EXPLOSIVES AND *GET OUT!*

WHERE IN ALL THOSE BRIEFINGS DID YOU HEAR THAT YOU SHOULD TRY TO *MAKE FRIENDS* WITH THE ENEMY?!

THE *ENEMY?!* YOU CAN'T UNDERSTAND WHAT THEY PUT US THROUGH... HOW BROKEN *ALL OF US* ARE. HE WAS ON THE EDGE. HE COULD HAVE BEEN TURNED.

YOU DO *NOT* GET TO BE ANGRY WITH ME, CLARK! YOU *KNEW* THERE WASN'T ANY FILE IN THERE. YOU *LIED* TO ME. AND FOR *WHAT?*

A *MASK?* SOME DAMNED *SYMBOL?* WHEN PEOPLE'S LIVES ARE IN DANGER?!

...

THERE WAS A SOCIAL FUNCTION, TEN YEARS AGO, BACK WHEN I WAS FIRST TRYING TO INGRATIATE MYSELF WITH THE COURT...

*...I HAD EARNED THEIR ATTENTION OVER THE COURSE OF SEVERAL HIGH SOCIETY AFFAIRS, SO A MAN CAME UP TO ME AND TOLD ME TO COME TO A SIDE ROOM.

*THERE, I WATCHED A YOUNG WOMAN GET RIPPED APART BY DOGS WHILE THESE MEN AND WOMEN *CHEERED.*

ONE OF THEM LOOKED AT ME, RAISED HIS GLASS AND GRINNED. IT TOOK EVERYTHING I HAD IN ME TO RETURN THAT GRIN AND RAISE MY GLASS IN RETURN.

THESE PEOPLE, CALVIN... WHAT THEY'VE GOTTEN AWAY WITH OVER THE DECADES, IT'S *UNSPEAKABLE.*

SO, YES. I THOUGHT THAT MAYBE TAKING DOWN THEIR SINGLE GREATEST HORDE OF WEALTH WAS A LITTLE MORE IMPORTANT THAN SAVING YOUR *GIRLFRIEND.*

REMEMBER WHAT YOU'RE DEALING WITH HERE, CALVIN.

WE'RE GO NG TO *WAR* WITH ONE OF THE MOST POWERFUL SECRET ORGANIZATIONS ON EARTH, AND WE'RE DOING IT *ALONE*.

WE HAVE MORE KNOWLEDGE OF THEIR OPERATIONS THAN ANYONE WHO HAS FACED THEM BEFORE--AND AFTER TONIGHT, THEY KNOW IT.

THIS IS WHEN THEY STRIKE BACK, CALVIN. THIS IS WHEN THIS WHOLE EXPERIMENT GETS REAL. YOU *NEED* TO GET YOUR PRIORITIES STRAIGHT.

WE CAN TAKE THEM DOWN. BUT ONLY IF WE WORK TOGETHER. YOU NEED TO TRUST THAT I KNOW WHAT I'M DOING HERE.

AFTER TONIGHT, HOW *DARE* YOU ASK ME FOR MY TRUST!

I'M GOING TO MANHATTAN TO GET CASEY AND SARAH. I'M GOING TO MAKE SURE THEY'RE SAFE... HELP ME DO THAT, AND I'LL FINISH THIS WITH YOU.

BUT *NEVER* ASK ME TO TRUST YOU AGAIN THIS IS A *JOB*, AND I'M DOING IT FOR THEM AND FOR ME. *NOT* FOR YOU, AND DEFINITELY NOT JUST FOR THE GREATER GOOD.

DO YOU UNDERSTAND ME?

YES.

GOOD. AND *LET* THEM STRIKE BACK. I'VE MANAGED TO TAKE DOWN THREE OF THEIR TALONS SO FAR.

WHAT COULD THEY HAVE THAT WE WOULDN'T SEE COMING A MILE AWAY?

"IT SHOULD NOW BE CLEAR TO ALL OF US HOW DANGEROUS *CALVIN ROSE* CAN BE TO OUR ORGANIZATION.

"THE TIME FOR HALF-MEASURES IS *OVER*."

DEEP BENEATH GOTHAM...

WE CANNOT SPARE ANY OF OUR TALONS... TONIGHT'S LOSSES PROVE WE NEED THEM IN PLACE, GUARDING OUR ASSETS.

WE AGREED, MONTHS AGO, THAT THEIR DISGRACED BRETHREN...

...THESE UNGRATEFUL *TRAITORS* WOULD STAY IN THE GROUND WHILE WE *RAZED GOTHAM.*

BUT THINGS HAVE *CHANGED*, AND IT IS NOW TIME TO CALL UPON ONE OF *THE UNWORTHY.*

AND THERE IS PRECISELY *ONE MAN* FIT TO HANDLE THE TASK AT HAND.

WELCOME, BROTHERS--TO THE *TOMB OF THE UNWORTHY.*

THE RESURRECTION PROCESS HAS ALREADY BEGUN.

ALREADY BEGUN? I THOUGHT WE'D HAVE THE CHANCE TO DISCUSS THIS. WHO IS IT THAT YOU'VE CHOSEN?

THE SUBJECT IS ***FELIX HARMON.*** WE TRAPPED, KILLED, AND ENTOMBED HIM HERE IN THE 1860s.

THE GOTHAM BUTCHER? GOD...

THAT MONSTER KILLED ONE-HUNDRED AND FORTY UNTARGETED CIVILIANS AND TWO MEMBERS OF ***THE COURT*** DURING HIS TIME AS OUR TALON.

HE DID IT OUT OF ***BOREDOM.*** THE COURT OF THAT ERA DIDN'T GIVE HIM A CHALLENGE BEFITTING HIS STRENGTH OR POWER... SO HE CHALLENGED HIMSELF.

AND WHAT IF HE DECIDES TO "CHALLENGE HIMSELF" AGAIN?!

WE'VE IMPLANTED FOUR ***FREEZING BOMBS*** IN HIS HEAD... THE MOMENT HE STEPS OUT OF LINE, WE'LL DETONATE THEM.

BUT THAT SAID, WE HAVE A TASK AT HAND THAT WILL PROVE QUITE THE CHALLENGE.

AND THESE DAYS, HE'LL FIND WE DON'T CARE TOO MUCH ABOUT HOW MANY HE KILLS TO GET WHAT WE WANT.

HE'S STIRRING.

EXCELLENT.

CAN YOU HEAR ME, FELIX? WE HAVE AN ***ASSIGNMENT*** FOR YOU. YOUR FIRST IN ONE-HUNDRED AND SIXTY YEARS.

HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO *KILL AGAIN?*

HOW CAN I REFUSE?

NO TURNS
1400
Broadway

NEW YORK CITY. SIX YEARS AGO...

I DON'T ACCEPT THIS, CALVIN. THERE *HAS* TO BE ANOTHER WAY.

THERE ISN'T, CASEY. I SAW THE *TALON* WITH MY OWN EYES. IT WON'T BE LONG BEFORE HE FINDS US. I HAVE TO LEAD HIM AWAY. I HAVE TO *LEAVE THE CITY.*

IT'S THE *ONLY WAY* YOU'LL BE SAFE.

LET HIM FIND US. WE CAN BEAT HIM AND DRAG HIM INTO THE LIGHT! THIS ISN'T GOTHAM CITY, DAMMIT--WE CAN *WIN* HERE!

YOU DON'T THINK THE COURT HAS *POWER* HERE?

YOU DON'T THINK THEY CAN MAKE A POLICE CASE DISAPPEAR? A NEWS ARTICLE?

YOU HAVE TO *STOP UNDERESTIMATING* THEM, CASEY!

AND YOU HAVE TO STOP BEING SO DAMNED *AFRAID.*

I *AM* AFRAID. AFRAID FOR YOU. AFRAID FOR *SARAH*...I WON'T LET THE TWO OF YOU FALL INTO THEIR GRASP JUST TO MAKE A STAND.

SO WHAT-- YOU'RE JUST GOING TO *ABANDON* EVERYTHING WE'VE BUILT IN THE LAST YEAR...FOR *WHAT?* DO YOU REALLY THINK YOU CAN KEEP RUNNING *FOREVER?*

IF I HAVE TO, YES.

...

CENTRAL CITY.

WHAT?

MY FATHER HAD A P.O. BOX IN CENTRAL CITY. I'LL PROCESS FIVE ALTERNATE SETS OF IDENTITIES FOR YOU AND SEND THEM TO THAT ADDRESS. THEY'LL BE THERE IN A WEEK.

CASEY, I DON'T NEED--

DON'T TELL ME WHAT YOU *NEED*, CALVIN. IF YOU'RE GOING TO DO THIS, YOU'RE GOING TO DO IT *RIGHT.*

YOU CALL THIS NUMBER WHEN YOU'RE DOWN TO YOUR LAST IDENTITY. LEAVE A MESSAGE, DOESN'T MATTER WHAT YOU SAY. I'LL RECOGNIZE YOUR VOICE.

A WEEK LATER, FIVE NEW IDENTITIES WILL BE IN THE P.O. BOX, ALONG WITH THE NEW NUMBER TO CALL NEXT TIME.

THERE. I'VE DONE MY PART.

DON'T YOU HAVE A BUS TO CATCH?

CASEY...

NO. THAT'S OVER, TOO. YOU'VE MADE YOUR CHOICE.

SO RUN, LITTLE TALON.

RUN.

PRESENT DAY...

HUDSON FINANCIAL RUNS THE LARGEST BUNDLE OF COURT INVESTMENTS IN NORTH AMERICA. WE'RE TALKING OVER THIRTEEN BILLION IN COMBINED ASSETS.

THE COURT HAS PUT A **TALON** IN CHARGE OF SECURITY FOR THE ENTIRE BANK!

OF COURSE THEY DID.

ARE YOU EVEN **LISTENING** TO ME?

NOT REALLY. NO.

I DIDN'T COME ALL THE WAY TO NEW YORK CITY FOR A *BANK HEIST*, SEBASTIAN. WE'LL DISCUSS THIS AFTER CASEY AND SARAH ARE *SAFE*.

YOU'VE BEEN STANDING ON THE BROOKLYN BRIDGE, WAITING FOR HER TO MAKE CONTACT FOR THE LAST HALF HOUR. DO YOU EVEN KNOW IF SHE GOT YOUR MESSAGE?

I'M SURE SHE DID.

STILL, I DON'T LIKE IT. YOU SHOULDN'T BE SETTING MEETS LIKE THIS. THE COURT HAS WAYS TO INTERCEPT--

NOT WITH CASEY. HER FATHER'S SECURITY TECHNOLOGY IS UNBREAK-ABLE.

THEY HAVE HIS PATENTS FROM SECURITUS. NOT HIS *PRIVATE* WORK...

...WAIT. SOMEONE'S COMING.

RIGHT. THAT'S WHY THE COURT TOOK OVER HIS COMPANY WHEN SHE WAS DECLARED *DEAD*, CALVIN. THEY *HAVE* HIS TECHNOLOGY.

CASEY?

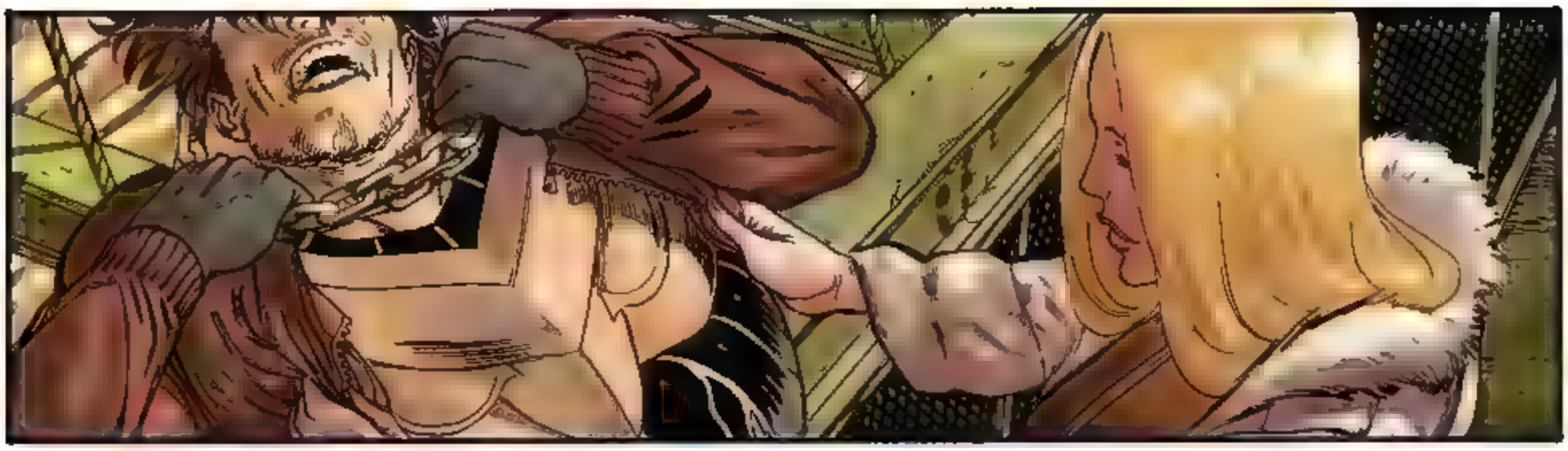
NO. SOMEONE *ELSE*.

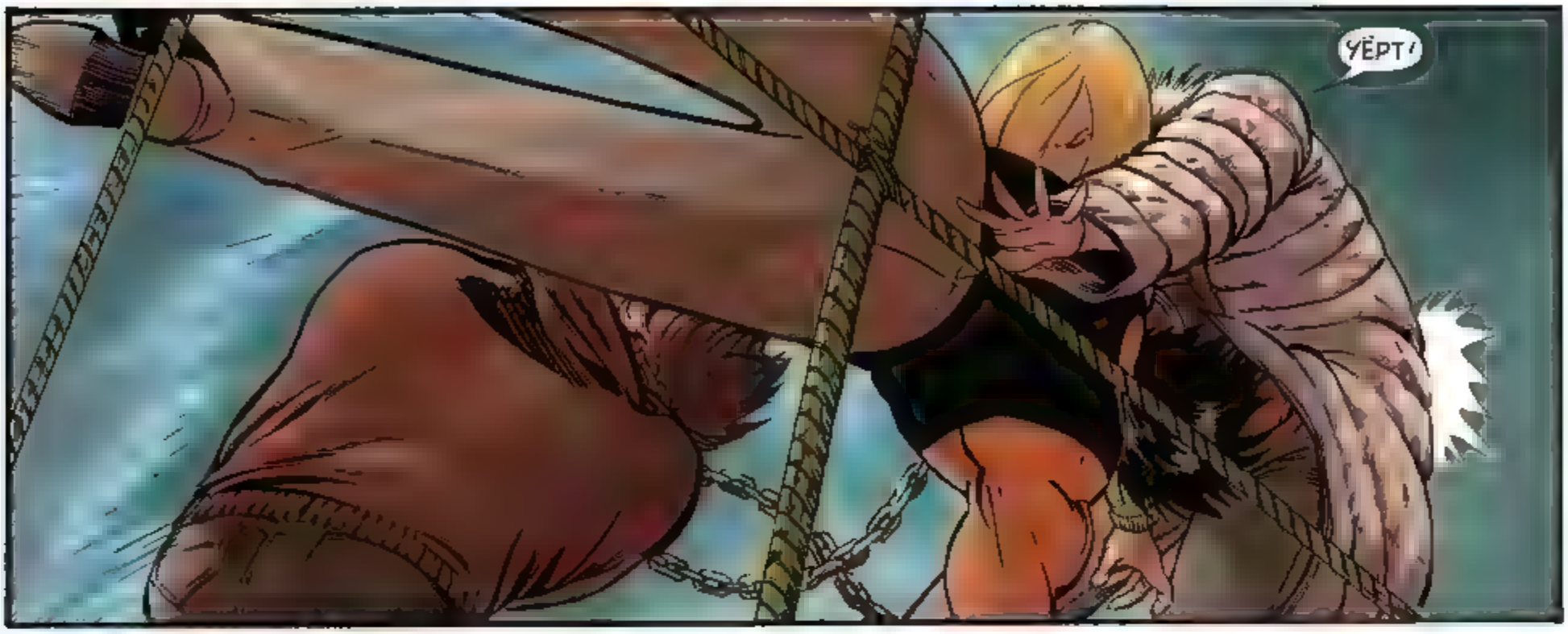
JOEY, NOW!

WHA--?

KINDA LATE FOR SIGHT-SEEING. DON'TCHA THINK?

-ACK-

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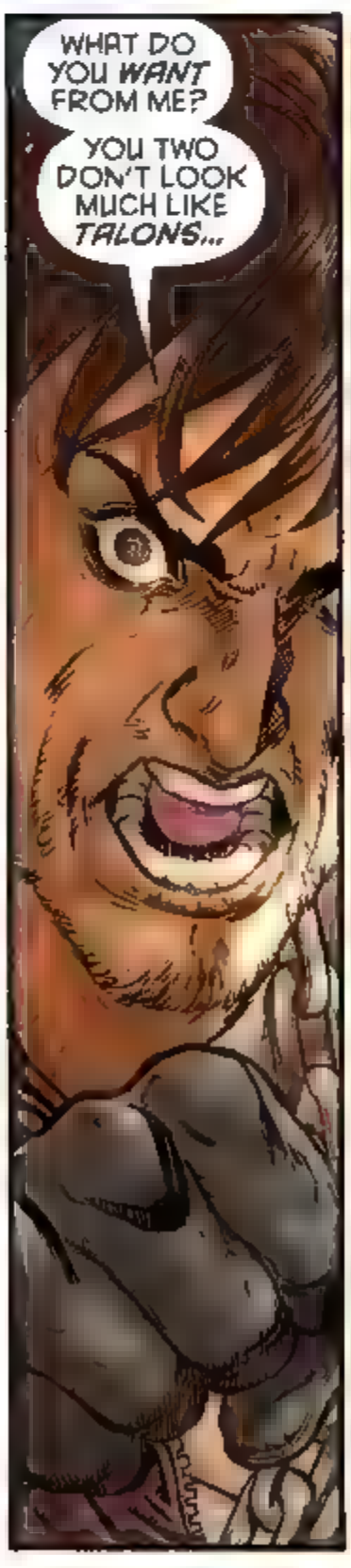
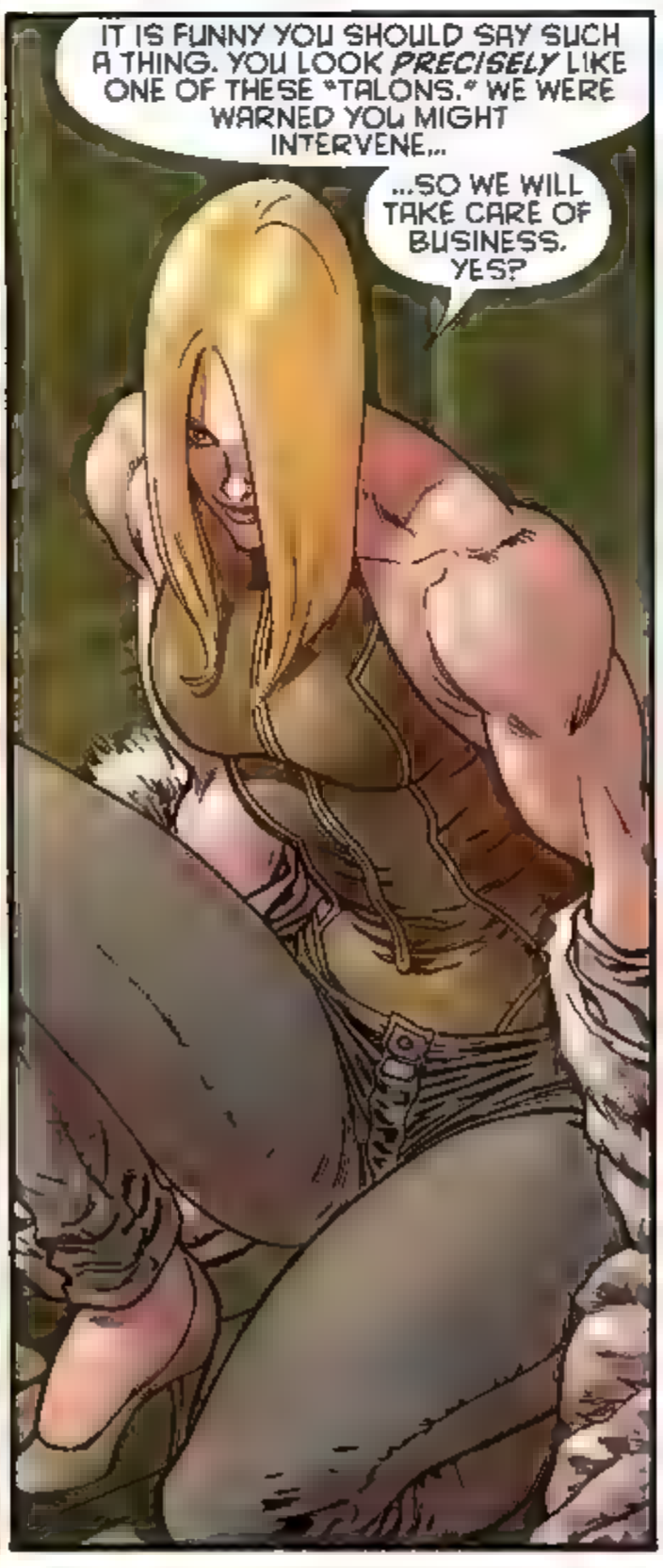
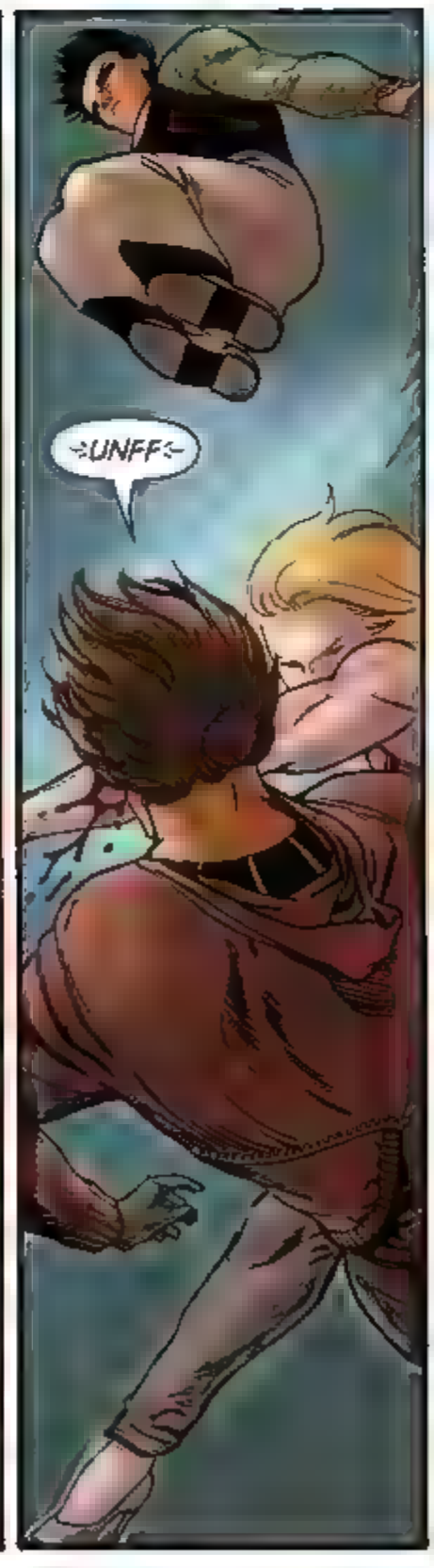

WHAT DO YOU WANT FROM ME?
YOU TWO DON'T LOOK MUCH LIKE TALONS...


IT IS FUNNY YOU SHOULD SAY SUCH A THING. YOU LOOK PRECISELY LIKE ONE OF THESE "TALONS." WE WERE WARNED YOU MIGHT INTERVENE...
...SO WE WILL TAKE CARE OF BUSINESS. YES?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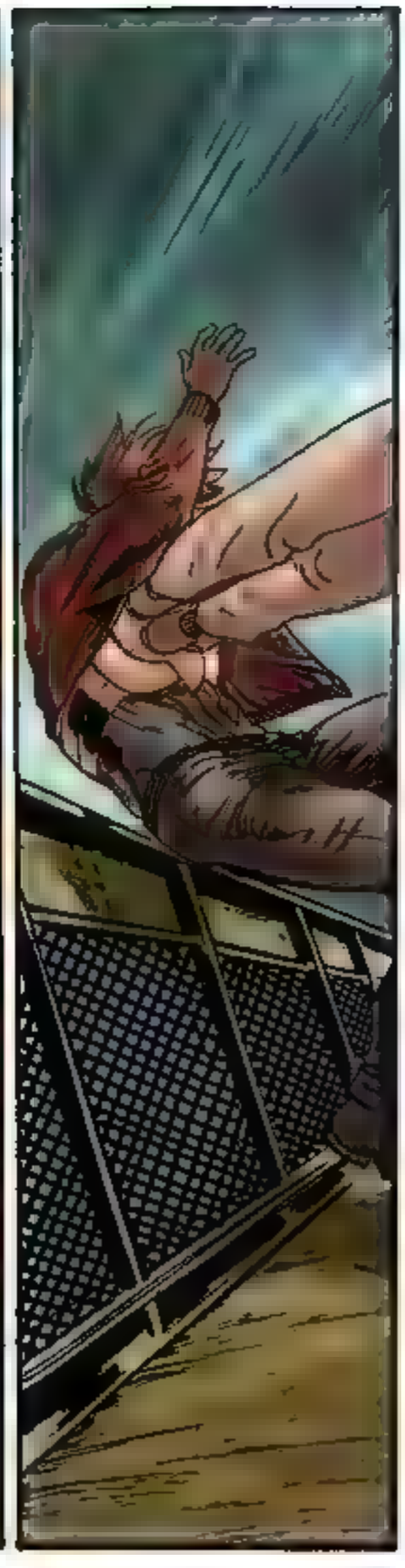

CALVIN--WHAT'S HAPPENING? MY VIDEO CONNECTION WAS CUT...

KINDA BUSY

AT THE

MOMENT.

ALL RIGHT. LET'S GET THIS OVER WITH.

SORRY, KID--

PTOW

--BUT YOU DON'T GET TO WIN THIS ONE.

THUD

CALVIN, WHAT'S GOING ON?!

CALVIN! ARE YOU THERE?

SPLASH

HEY...HEY BUDDY, YOU UP?

THERE WE GO. WE'RE GONNA HAVE A NICE *CONVERSATION* NOW. HOW'S THAT SOUND?

WHO THE HELL ARE *YOU?* WHERE AM I?

MY NAME'S NICKY...MY PARTNER HERE IS EDGAR.

HE DOESN'T *SAY* MUCH, BUT LOOK AT THE *ARMS* ON HIM. NOT EXACTLY THE GUY YOU WANT TO GET ON THE *WRONG SIDE* OF, EH?

HSSSS...

SETTLE DOWN, ED, WE'RE ALL FRIENDS HERE. AIN'T THAT RIGHT, CAL?

YOU'RE WHAT? *FIVE FAMILIES* PROBABLY, OR SOME OTHER *MAFIA WANNABES*... AND THAT GUY'S CLEARLY *BASILISK*...USED TO BE, ANYWAYS.

I KNOW *EXACTLY* WHERE I AM. WHERE'S YOUR BOSS?

WE GOT A REGULAR SHERLOCK HOLMES OVER HERE, *HUH?*

WELL, SEEING AS YOU'RE ROCKIN' A GIANT FREAKING *OWL-FACE* ON YOUR CHEST, WE'VE GOT A PRETTY GOOD IDEA WHO *YOU'RE* WORKING FOR, TOO.

DO YOU, NOW?

DOES *SHE* EVEN KNOW I'M HERE? PROBABLY NOT, SHE'D NEVER BE STUPID ENOUGH TO LEAVE ME IN THESE SECOND-RATE CUFFS.

GIK

YOU SHOULD'VE KNOWN YOU'D NEED A LITTLE SOMETHING *EXTRA* TO KEEP ME LOCKED UP.

WHIP WHIP

HUH?

WHIP WHIP

ARRAH!

YOU'RE RIGHT, CAL...

...I'M NOWHERE *NEAR* THAT STUPID.

MOMMY, WHY IS CALVIN HANGING UP THERE? DID HE DO SOMETHING *BAD?*

HEY, SARAH,... LONG TIME NO SEE, KID.

YOU LOOK SILLY.

I BET YOU'D LOOK PRETTY SILLY TOO, HANGING FROM THE CEILING.

SARAH, WHY DON'T YOU GO BACK TO YOUR ROOM...

...WHAT IS *THIS,* SOME KIND OF *JOKE?*

IT'S A LONG STORY, CASEY...

SNAP

FINE. START TALKING.

LATER.

YOU WANT ME TO *LEAVE?* WE MADE A DECISION WHEN WE CAME TO THIS CITY THAT WE WOULDN'T LET *FEAR* RULE US.

THAT WE WOULD TRY TO HELP PEOPLE LIKE US BUILD A *SECOND LIFE.*

THESE ARE THE PEOPLE THE AUTHORITIES NEVER COULD HELP. THEY'RE RUNNING FROM THE MOST POWERFUL CRIMINAL ORGANIZATIONS ON THE PLANET.

JUST BECAUSE YOU ABANDONED THAT DREAM DOESN'T MEAN *I* HAVE. I'VE WORKED *HARD* TO KEEP THIS NETWORK ALIVE ALL THESE YEARS. PEOPLE'S LIVES DEPEND ON THE WORK I DO.

AND YOU WANT ME TO RUN FROM IT ALL? I *WON'T* DO IT.

LOOK, YOU'VE BEEN TELLING ME TO STAND MY GROUND AND FIGHT FOR YEARS. THAT'S *EXACTLY* WHAT I'M DOING. BUT YOU HAVE TO UNDERSTAND...

...FIGHTING THE COURT LIKE THIS IS GOING TO MEAN RETRIBUTION. IT'S GOING TO MEAN THAT THEY'LL HIT ANYTHING AND EVERYTHING I CARE ABOUT.

AND WHAT I CARE ABOUT IS *YOU.*

CAN'T YOU SEE THAT? WHO KNOWS WHAT HORRORS THEY'LL SEND. I CAN *PROTECT* YOU. YOU *AND* SARAH.

SO, WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO? KNOCK ME OUT, THROW ME OVER YOUR SHOULDER AND DRAG ME OUT OF HERE? IT WORKED THE LAST TIME.

THEY *KNOW* WHERE YOU *ARE!*

OR THEY'RE JUST PRETENDING TO, BECAUSE THEY KNOW IT'LL DISTRACT YOU FROM YOUR GOALS. HAVE YOU GIVEN ANY OF THIS A *SECOND THOUGHT* AT ALL?

PLEASE, LISTEN...

I *HAVE* BEEN LISTENING. HELL, WE HACKED INTO YOUR EARPIECE THE SECOND YOU STEPPED ONTO THAT BRIDGE.

DO YOU REALLY THINK I'D HAVE LET YOU IN THIS BASE IF I BELIEVED FOR A MINUTE YOU'D BEEN COMPROMISED? WE'RE NOT AMATEURS *OR* IDIOTS, CALVIN.

THIS ISN'T JUST SOME LOW-STAKES SAFE HOUSE. WE MOVED PAST THAT YEARS AGO.

I HAVE A TEAM OF THE TOP COVERT OPERATIVES ON THE PLANET, EXILED FROM ORGANIZATIONS WITH THE SAME KIND OF REACH AND POWER AS THE COURT.

WE DON'T JUST TAKE PEOPLE IN ANYMORE, WE GO OUT AND *SAVE* THEM.

THIS IS TRUE. MISS CASEY SAVED ME FROM AN ENDLESS LIFE OF GUARDING THE LAZARUS PIT FOR MY IMMORTAL MASTER, ***RA'S AL GHUL.***

I HAVE NO IDEA WHAT ANY OF THOSE WORDS MEAN...

IT MEANS THE ***LEAGUE OF ASSASSINS,*** CALVIN IT MEANS SHE'S THE BEST. THEY ***ALL*** ARE.

CASEY...WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO ***PROVE*** HERE?

I WANT YOU TO SEE WHAT I'VE BUILT HERE. I WANT YOU TO UNDERSTAND HOW ***STRONG*** WE REALLY ARE.

WITH YOUR STRIKE TEAM'S RESUMES?

I HAD SOMETHING ***ELSE*** IN MIND... NICKY, YOU READY?

SIR, YES, SIR. THE BASTARD KEEPS RECONFIGURING HIS COMM LINK, BUT WE'VE FINALLY GOT IT LOCKED.

GOOD. LOOP HIM IN.

WHAT THE--WHO THE ***HELL*** IS THIS?!

MR. CLARK, MY NAME IS CASEY WASHINGTON. I HAVE A ***PROPOSITION*** FOR YOU.

YOU AND CALVIN HERE ARE LOOKING TO TAKE DOWN ONE OF THE MOST SECURE BANKS IN NEW YORK CITY. IT'LL BE NEXT TO ***IMPOSSIBLE*** TO DO IT ON YOUR OWN, SO YOU'RE GOING TO LET ***US*** HELP YOU.

WAIT... WHAT?!

ABSOLUTELY NOT!

YOU SEEM LIKE A SMART MAN, MR. CLARK. YOU'VE RUN THROUGH THE SAME SCHEMATICS MY MEN HAVE BEEN LOOKING THROUGH ALL NIGHT. YOU KNOW YOU COULD USE OUR HELP.

HUDSON FINANCIAL'S SECURITY IS RUN BY AN UNDEAD KILLING MACHINE, MS. WASHINGTON. THERE'S ONLY ONE PERSON IN THAT ROOM CAPABLE OF TAKING HIM DOWN.

DO THIS MY WAY AND HE'LL NEVER REALIZE WE'RE IN THE BUILDING.

AND WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO GAIN FROM THIS?

A LITTLE BIT OF TRUST...

...AND A LOT OF *MONEY.*

THAT'S THE TRADEOFF. YOU'RE OUT TO DRAIN THE COURT OF OWLS' FINANCIAL RESOURCES? FUNNEL IT INTO MY ORGANIZATION'S OFF-SHORE ACCOUNTS.

IN MY HANDS, THE MONEY WILL GO DIRECTLY TO HELPING PEOPLE HURT BY ORGANIZATIONS LIKE THE COURT, ALL OVER THE WORLD.

IF SHE SAYS SHE CAN HELP, I BELIEVE HER, CLARK. HELL, HER MEN TOOK *ME* DOWN. SEEMS LIKE THEY COULD DEFINITELY LEND A HAND.

WELL, ALL RIGHT, MS. WASHINGTON. I'M LISTENING.

THE NEXT DAY.

UDSON FINANCIAL

I DON'T LIKE THIS, SEBASTIAN...HOW THE HELL AM I GOING TO GET THROUGH THEIR SECURITY WITH THIS *MASK* ON?

YOU THINK I'D LET YOU WALK IN THERE WITH A MASK THAT COULDN'T PASS THROUGH A SECURITY CHECKPOINT? HAVE A LITTLE FAITH, CALVIN.

HU

IT'S CUTTING-EDGE WAYNETECH, LIGHT-SCULPTING YOUR FACE INTO SOMETHING NEW THROUGH SMALL ELECTROMAGNETIC CONDUCTORS.

WISH I HAD THOUGHT OF IT MYSELF, FRANKLY. THAT *LUCIUS FOX* IS A DAMN GENIUS.

NOW STEADY...AND REMEMBER, YOU'RE NOT CALVIN ROSE ANYMORE. YOU ARE *PABLO LUCIANO* FROM THE PITTSBURGH OFFSHOOT OF THE FIVE FAMILIES.

STAY CALM AND THIS TALON ISN'T GOING TO NOTICE A THING.

MR. LUCIANO, WELCOME TO HUDSON FINANCIAL...I AM ROGER BLACK, HEAD OF SECURITY. I WAS TOLD TO MEET YOU HERE.

IF YOU FOLLOW ME, I CAN DIRECT YOU TO THE SECURE WING.

CLEAR.

MR. LUCIANO, AS PRESIDENT OF HUDSON FINANCIAL, I HOPE YOU FORGIVE OUR EXTENSIVE SECURITY PRACTICES.

I KNOW MR. BLACK IN PARTICULAR CAN BE RATHER... *UNSETTLING.*

AS LONG AS HE SCARES AWAY PRYING EYES ALONG WITH WEAK-STOMACHED CUSTOMERS, I'D CONSIDER HIM QUITE AN *ASSET.*

QUITE RIGHT!

NOW, LET'S SEE IF WE CAN FIND A PLACE FOR THE PROCEEDS OF YOUR ILLUSTRIOUS BUSINESS... TUCKED AWAY FROM THOSE PRYING EYES YOU MENTIONED.

LEAD THE WAY.

HE'S IN.

"YOUR TURN, MS. VOLKOVA."

BANG

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, THIS IS A STAND-UP!

STICK-UP! STICK-UP! HOW MANY TIMES--

IT DOESN'T MATTER, CASEY. I'VE JUST SHUT OFF THE CALL TO THE POLICE. IS THE NEXT TEAM READY?

JOEY SHOULD BE IN POSITION IN JUST ANOTHER MINUTE, AND THE NEXT WAVE IS GOOD TO GO.

IT'S ALL ON CALVIN, NOW.

WERE THOSE *GUNSHOTS?*

WHY, I'M SURE THEY--

YOU WANT ME TO *TRUST* YOUR SECURITY HERE? GO SEE WHAT THE PROBLEM IS!

Y-YES. OF COURSE, MR. LUCIANO.

CLK

TOOK YOUR TIME, DIDN'T YOU?

EVERYTHING'S RUNNING ON SCHEDULE.

THEN IT'S TIME FOR YOU TO SUIT UP AND FOR ME TO GET THE HELL OUT OF HERE.

ALL RIGHT, SEBASTIAN, HOW LONG IS THIS GOING TO TAKE?

JUST REGISTERING THE CONNECTION NOW...

...OKAY, I'M IN.

THE PROGRAM SEEMS TO BE WORKING IT SHOULD ONLY TAKE A COUPLE MORE MINUTES, AND EVERY SINGLE ONE OF THE COURT'S ACCOUNTS WILL BE EMPTIED.

CASEY, SEND IN THE FINAL DISTRACTION.

NICKY, YOU'RE UP.

SLAM

PUT YOUR HANDS UP!

THIS IS THE POLICE!

SO, CAL, YOU CONVINCED YET?

YOU'RE JUST AFRAID TO ADMIT YOU MIGHT HAVE BEEN **WRONG** ALL THIS TIME.

WE'RE NOT FINISHED YET, CASEY. BUT EVEN SO... A BANK HEIST ISN'T QUITE THE SAME AS BEING HUNTED BY THE MOST DANGEROUS KILLERS ON EARTH.

GIVE IT A REST, YOU TWO. WE'RE ALMOST THERE.

I'M GOING TO MAKE SURE THE ESCAPE ROUTE IS CLEAR.

JUST DON'T LET THAT CORD DISCONNECT.

LOOKS LIKE A STRAIGHT SHOT.

THIRTY SECONDS, AND THEN YOU'RE FREE TO JUMP.

ALL RIGHT, SEBASTIAN. SOUNDS GOOD... I'M READY TO GET OUT OF HERE.

I AM SORRY, MISTER ROSE.

-UCK-

DC Comics presents THE TALON in

STING OF THE PAST

Story by Scott Snyder and James Tynion IV

Written by James Tynion IV

Art by Guillem March

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Every night the nightmare changes. I find myself surrounded by those familiar white masks, and from the darkness emerges a Talon.

Each time he's a little bit bigger, a little less human and a little more monster.

I see him and I know I'm about to die. And that afterwards, this creature will hunt down and destroy everyone I love.

Casey says I let my fear of the Court of Owls rule my life. That they aren't monsters, only men. That they can be beaten.

I wish she was here now to say that to the monstrous Talon from my dreams, as he crushes my throat in his hand.

CALVIN! I NEED YOU TO ACT FAST!

YOU NEED TO DETACH THE TRANSCEIVER FROM YOUR SUIT AND THROW IT IN THE WINDOW BEFORE HE CUTS THE THREAD!

DO YOU HEAR ME, *CALVIN?*

WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON, SEBASTIAN? I'VE STILL GOT THREE OF MY AGENTS IN THE LOBBY VAMPING FOR TIME.

WE'VE BEEN ***ENGAGED,*** MS. WASHINGTON. IS MR. YAMAMOTO STILL IN THE BUILDING?

YES...WHAT ARE YOU--

GET HIM BACK IN THE OFFICE. ***NOW.*** HE NEEDS TO FINISH THE JOB.

BUT WHAT ABOUT CALVIN? IS THIS JUST ANOTHER TALON HE'S FACING?

... CONTACT JOEY. SEND HIM BACK. I'LL TAKE CARE OF THIS.

COMPUTER! ACCESS COURT DATABASE. IDENTIFY ENEMY TALON.

OPPONENT DOES NOT MATCH ANY ACTIVE TALON

I'VE NOT KILLED IN OVER 150 YEARS...I AM EAGER TO CHANGE THAT.

ALMOST...

KOFF KOFF THERE...

HOW STRANGE. YOU WISH TO REMOVE YOUR PROTECTION? I ASSURE YOU, MR. ROSE, YOU WILL NEED IT.

NO!

POP

AAAH!

"RUN DIAGNOSTICS."

ENEMY COMBATANT
ESTIMATED HEIGHT 7' 3"

DEAR GOD...

...IT COULDN'T BE...

THE TRUE FACE OF THE THAM BUTCHER

NO...THEY WOULDN'T HAVE *DARED*...

UM...GUYS? IT'S JOEY. I'M BACK IN THE OFFICE, BUT THERE'S A PROBLEM.

BAM BAM

WE GOTTA WRAP THIS UP QUICK. SECURITY'S TRYING TO GET BACK IN.

BLACK! DO YOU COPY?! I'VE BEEN LOCKED OUT OF MY OFFICE. THIS WHOLE THING IS A SHAM!

DO YOU HEAR ME? THEY'RE NOT AFTER THE CASH, THEY'RE AFTER SOMETHING MORE! PUT AN END TO IT. NOW!

HRM...

YPD

YOU'RE NOT POLICE OFFICERS...

CALVIN...YOU NEED TO LISTEN TO ME. THIS TALON'S NAME IS **FELIX HARMON**...IN THE 1860s THEY CALLED HIM **THE GOTHAM BUTCHER.**

HE'S THE MOST DANGEROUS WEAPON THE COURT **EVER USED.** HE ISN'T LIKE ANYONE YOU'VE FACED BEFORE.

YOU CAN'T WIN HERE. HE'LL KILL YOU!

OH, GOD

SWOOSH

YOU NEED TO GET OUT OF THERE! **NOW!**

YOU'RE STILL ALIVE? GOOD.

I WAS STARTING TO WORRY YOU WEREN'T GOING TO MAKE THIS WORTH IT.

YOU HAVE TO **RUN!**

DO YOU EVEN KNOW WHAT YOU'VE WALKED INTO? HAVE YOU ANY IDEA WHAT YOU'RE UP AGAINST?

ACTUALLY, WE'VE GOT A PRETTY GOOD IDEA. *TALON. COURT OF OWLS*...THAT WHOLE KIT AND CABOODLE. WE DIDN'T EXACTLY COME UNPREPARED.

CARE TO SHOW HIM, ANYA?

OF COURSE, NICKY.

IT'S AMAZING WHAT YOU CAN FIND ONLINE THESE DAYS. LIKE OLD *MR. FREEZE* RIFLE DESIGNS, FOR INSTANCE.

ONLY GOOD FOR ONE SHOT, BUT HELL, WHO NEEDS MORE THAN THAT?

DO SVIDANIYA, MR. BLACK.

ALL RIGHT, YOU GUYS...WE'RE READY TO BAIL. WHAT'S THE STATUS ON OUR GETAWAY DRIVER?

JOEY SHOULD BE DOWN IN A MOMENT.

SLAM

UH...HEY!

SMASH

THERE! GET HIM!

I'D LOVE TO STAY AND CHAT, BUT I HAVE TO RUN. SEEYA!

ALL RIGHT. JOEY'S OUT...DID WE GET WHAT WE CAME FOR?

WE'VE GOT OTHER CONCERNS.

I CAN SEND MY TEAM...THEY CAN HELP CAL--

NO THEY CAN'T. THIS ISN'T AN ORDINARY TALON, MS. WASHINGTON. THIS IS SOMETHING FAR MORE SERIOUS.

A MONSTER, DREDGED FROM THE DEPTHS OF THE COURT'S DARK HISTORY AND UNLEASHED UPON THE WORLD.

"THIS IS DEATH INCARNATE."

UNNNH

OKAY... -KOFF- I THINK... I'M READY TO RUN NOW.

RUN?

BUT MR. ROSE! WE'VE BARELY BEGUN.

SMASH

WHAM

HE'S GOING ..TO KILL ME...TELL CASEY--

TELL IT TO HER FACE TONIGHT! YOU'RE GOING TO GET OUT OF THIS, CALVIN. YOU'RE AN ESCAPE ARTIST, DAMMIT. THIS IS WHAT YOU DO.

LOOK DOWN. THERE SHOULD BE A SEWER GRATE RIGHT BESIDE YOU.

PULL UP THE GRATE AND JUMP DOWN IN 3...

2...

1...

NOW!

COME NOW, DON'T BE SHY...

...WE'RE NOT FINISHED YET!

THUD

OH... THIS IS FUN.

"SIR...NOTHING SEEMS TO BE OUT OF PLACE. BUT THERE'S SOMETHING *STRANGE* YOU SHOULD HEAR."

WE'RE GETTING REPORTS THAT THERE WERE MEN IN STRANGE OWL SUITS FIGHTING OUTSIDE...

DID...DID YOU SAY *OWL SUITS?*

NO... OH GOD, PLEASE..

"BRACE YOURSELF, CALVIN. THIS IS GOING TO *HURT.*"

YAAH!

THERE...IT'S RESET...BUT THIS IS SERIOUS DAMAGE. MORE SERIOUS THAN I KNOW HOW TO TREAT.

DO YOU SEE NOW, CASEY? DO YOU SEE THE CONSEQUENCES? DO YOU SEE WHAT THEY CAN *DO*?

WHAT I SEE IS A BRAVE MAN WHO FOUGHT AS LONG AS HE COULD UNTIL HIS FRIENDS GOT AWAY...

I SEE SOMEONE WHO FACED SOMETHING TERRIBLE AND *SURVIVED*.

WAIT. THIS ISN'T RIGHT...

CALVIN! YOUR SUIT'S BEEN COMPROMISED. THERE WAS A TRACER...

CASEY, WE'VE JUST HEARD FROM NICKY AT OUR OUTER SECURITY GATE.

THERE ARE STRANGE NOISES THERE.

DAMMIT! COMPUTER, GIVE ME VISUAL ON THE GATES.

CAN YOU HEAR ME, NICKY? YOU NEED TO GET *OUT* OF THERE!

I CAN TAKE CARE OF THIS BASTARD.

WHY HELLO THERE, LITTLE MAN.

OH GOD...

NOT LIKE THIS...

CRACK

NICKY!

MUSSSSST KILL... MUSSSSSST RIP!

NO. WE HAVE OVER FIFTY PEOPLE IN THIS BASE, EDGAR. *FAMILIES.*

I NEED YOU AND JOEY TO GET THOSE PEOPLE DOWN TO THE EVACUATION TUNNEL AND OUT OF THIS BASE IN THE NEXT THREE MINUTES.

DO YOU *UNDERSTAND* ME, EDGAR? REVENGE COMES LATER. NOW IS THE TIME TO *RUN.*

ANYA, MAKE SURE MY DAUGHTER'S ON THE TRANSPORT BEFORE IT LEAVES. YOU KEEP SARAH SAFE, AND TELL MY GIRL HOW MUCH HER MOTHER LOVES HER, OKAY?

OF COURSE.

AND WHAT ABOUT *YOU*, CASEY?

IF THE COMPUTER SYSTEM HERE WAS COMPROMISED, DOZENS OF PEOPLE WE'VE SAVED IN THE LAST FEW YEARS COULD BE IN DANGER.

I NEED TO WIPE EVERYTHING CLEAN. THERE WON'T BE TIME FOR ME TO GET OUT WITH THE REST. I'LL LET THIS MONSTER FIND ME, BUT THEY'LL BE SAFE.

MY GIRL WILL BE SAFE...

I WON'T LET YOU COMMIT SUICIDE. THERE *HAS* TO BE A WAY TO WIN THIS. THERE HAS TO BE A WAY TO *FIGHT*.

SEBASTIAN, I KNOW THIS HARMON GUY ISN'T AN ORDINARY TALON, BUT WAS HE BROUGHT BACK LIKE ONE?

YES. IT SEEMS SO, BUT--

WHICH MEANS THE SAME WEAKNESSES. ALL WE NEED TO DO IS GET HIS CORE BODY TEMPERATURE DOWN, AND HE'LL BE DONE FOR.

THERE'S A WAY... A FAIL-SAFE BUILT INTO THE ESCAPE ROUTE...

...BUT CALVIN, IT WOULD MEAN USING YOUR SUIT TO LEAD HIM DEEP INTO THE TUNNEL. THERE'S NO WAY YOU COULD GET OUT IN TIME...

BUT *YOU* WILL.

WHERE ARE WE GOING?

THE TUNNEL LETS OUT NEAR NEWARK, MA'AM. YOU GOT YOUR NEW PASSPORTS, RIGHT?

WE'LL GET YOU ON A BUS OR PLANE. YOU'LL BE AS FAR AWAY FROM NEW YORK AS YOU CAN IMAGINE BY THE END OF THE DAY

I DON'T UNDERSTAND... WHERE'S MY MOM?

DARLING, YOUR MOTHER WILL CATCH UP WITH US. BUT WE HAVE TO GO NOW. IT ISN'T SAFE HERE ANYMORE.

NO! I'M NOT LEAVING WITHOUT MY MOM!

DAMMIT! OPEN THE DOORS!

THE SYSTEM'S AUTOMATIC... THERE'S NO WAY TO TURN BACK NOW!

THE SYSTEM'S SHUTTING DOWN. YOUR CONNEC-TION, TOO.

IT'S BEEN A PLEASURE, MS. WASHINGTON

DO YOU TH NK...IS THERE ANY CHANCE...

REMEMBER WHO YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT, CASEY. I CERTAINLY WOULDN'T BET AGAI--

ZZZZT

MAMA?

SARAH! WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING HERE? IT'S *NOT SAFE.*

YOU WEREN'T ON THE TRAIN... I'M SCARED, MAMA...WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN TO US?

COME HERE, BABY, COME HERE...WE'RE GOING TO BE FINE.

"IT'S NOT THE TWO OF US I'M WORRIED ABOUT."

I KNOW YOU ARE HERE, MR. ROSE. COME AND MEET YOUR DEATH LIKE A MAN.

I'M NOT RUNNING FROM YOU, HARMON. I'VE BEEN *WAITING.*

HAH! SO, THIS IS SOME KIND OF TRAP? HOW QUAINT. THE THING YOU MUST UNDERSTAND, MR. ROSE, IS THAT I DON'T CARE IF I KILL YOU TODAY.

I WILL HUNT YOU, KILLING EVERYTHING IN MY PATH, UNTIL THE DAY I TEAR YOUR THROAT OPEN WITH MY BARE HANDS.

I WILL TAKE EVERY-THING YOU LOVE AND EVISCERATE IT. FROM YOUR PRECIOUS CASEY WASHINGTON TO HER DARLING CHILD, SARAH.

IT'S BEEN WELL OVER A CENTURY SINCE I'VE HAD SUCH FUN. I'VE NO QUALMS PROLONGING THE EXPERIENCE.

YEAH. THAT'S *NOT* GOING TO HAPPEN. NOT SURE IF YOUR HANDLERS TOLD YOU, BUT COMING BACK FROM THE GRAVE HAS ITS DOWN-SIDES.

DO YOU KNOW WHAT THE *TEMPERATURE* OF THE HUDSON RIVER IS THIS TIME OF YEAR?

CASEY. NOW.

CLUNK

SMASH

MARK MY WORDS, LITTLE TALON. THIS IS NOT OVER.

WHERE WILL WE GO NOW?

WITH THE NETWORK SCRAMBLED, IT'LL BE MONTHS BEFORE WE CAN REBUILD. IT COULD TAKE THAT LONG JUST TO RECONNECT WITH ANYA, JOEY, AND EDGAR...

I'M SORRY, SWEETIE, BUT WE'RE GOING TO HAVE TO *RUN.*

NO.

WE'VE BOTH HAD ENOUGH RUNNING FOR A LIFETIME.

YOU'LL COME BACK TO GOTHAM AND WE'LL FIGHT THESE MOSTERS TOGETHER.

LIKE WE SHOULD HAVE DONE FROM THE BEGINNING.

YOU'RE ALIVE!

HOW DID YOU--?

I BRACED MYSELF AS THE WATER CAME DOWN, AND ONCE THE TUNNEL WAS FULL ENOUGH I STARTED SWIMMING.

IT'S NOT THE FIRST TIME I HAD TO MAKE MY WAY UP FROM THE BOTTOM OF A RIVER, YOU KNOW.

BUT THAT DOESN'T MATTER. WHAT MATTERS IS THAT WE'RE *TOGETHER* NOW. AND TOGETHER, WE'RE UNSTOPPABLE.

TOGETHER WE CAN *END* THIS NIGHTMARE.

"AND WHAT ABOUT THAT CREATURE? WHAT ABOUT FELIX HARMON?"

"HE'S DONE FOR, CASEY.

"WE'LL NEVER SEE HIM AGAIN."

NIGHTMARES

STORY BY SCOTT SNYDER AND JAMES TYNION IV

WRITTEN BY JAMES TYNION IV

ART BY GUILLEM MARCH

COLORS BY TOMEU MOREY

LETTERS BY DEZI SIENTY

COVER BY GUILLEM MARCH AND TOMEU MOREY

ASSISTANT EDITOR KATIE KUBERT

EDITOR MIKE MARTS

GOTHAM CITY...

THE CHAIN OF EVENTS SEEMS TO HAVE BEGUN AT *THE METROPOLITAN.*

AN ANONYMOUS TIP LED THE *GCPD* TO COLLECT A *DEACTIVATED TALON* IN THE LOBBY. THERE WAS NO SIGN OF THE TALON'S OPPONENT.

THE ORCHARD HOTEL

THERMAL SCAN

SOON AFTER CAME THE THERMAL EVENT AT THE *ORCHARD HOTEL,* AN INSTITUTION WITH TIES TO SEVERAL SUSPECTED COURT OF OWLS MEMBERS.

THERE WAS A GLIMPSE OF A MAN LEAVING THE BUILDING A FEW MINUTES AFTER THE EVENT, BUT THE SECURITY FEED WAS CUT BEFORE A CLEARER IMAGE COULD BE OBTAINED.

THEN CAME THE BRAWL ON THE STREETS IN FRONT OF *HUDSON FINANCIAL* IN NEW YORK. I HAD TRACED A HEFTY SUM OF COURT MONEY THERE, BUT IT HAS SINCE BEEN *DEPLETED.*

TWO FIGURES, BOTH *TALONS* BY THE LOOK OF IT, FOUGHT BEFORE VANISHING INTO THE SUBWAY SYSTEM BELOW.

THIS HAS GIVEN US OUR CLEAREST IMAGE YET OF THE ATTACKER.

BRUCE, I'M NOT HERE FOR A CONSULTATION. WHEN I'M DONE UP HERE, I'M LEAVING.

THE COURT RETREATED INTO THE SHADOWS AFTER LAST YEAR, BUT *THIS* TALON SEEMS TO BE FORCING THEM BACK OUT INTO THE LIGHT.

BRUCE. STOP.

DICK, I KNOW THINGS HAVE BEEN DIFFICULT SINCE THE JOKER--

SERIOUSLY. STOP. I'M DONE. I'M LEAVING.

YOU CAN KEEP TALKING TO YOURSELF IN PRIVATE...*HMMM*... THAT GUY LOOKS REALLY *FAMILIAR* TO ME.

WHATEVER THIS IS...A BREAK IN THE COURT... SOME KIND OF INTERNAL WAR...

...IT'S BACKING THE COURT INTO A CORNER, WHILE THEY'RE STILL EXTREMELY *DANGEROUS*.

I'VE BEEN MOVING AGAINST THEM SILENTLY, TRYING TO DRAW THEM OUT IN SUBTLE WAYS. THIS IS MORE *AGGRESSIVE*.

THESE ACTIONS MAY SPARK A *WAR* THAT COULD PUT HUNDREDS OF INNOCENT PEOPLE IN DANGER.

IF WE DON'T GET TO THEM, AND QUICK...

...THERE'S NO TELLING *WHAT* THE BOULD DO NEXT...

CRACK

SIZZZZZ

SEBASTIAN CLARK'S UNDERGROUND BUNKER

ALL RIGHT, WHO'S READY FOR BREAK-FAST?

ME!

TWO EGGS COMING UP, SARAH. YOU GOOD, CASEY?

WELL, I GUESS *GOOD* ISN'T THE RIGHT WORD, IS IT?

CAL... YOU KNOW I APPRECIATE WHAT YOU AND SEBASTIAN HAVE DONE FOR US.

BUT WE'VE BEEN LOCKED AWAY IN THIS BASE FOR *TWO WEEKS*, AND I FEEL LIKE I'M GOING OUT OF MY MIND.

I LIKE IT HERE.

I KNOW, SWEETIE, BUT MOMMY NEEDS MORE THAN JUST A FORTY-FOOT SCREEN TO PLAY QBOX ON.

PSHAW. WHO NEEDS MORE THAN *THAT?*

I'M BEING SERIOUS... YOUR WOUNDS ARE PRACTICALLY HEALED, CALVIN. I KNOW YOU AND SEBASTIAN WILL BE MAKING YOUR NEXT STRIKE ON THE COURT SOON.

I WANT TO HELP.

I'M GLAD TO HEAR IT, CASEY.

MR. CLARK! ARE YOU GOING TO SHOW ME HOW TO BEAT THE DRAGON LEVEL TODAY?

OF COURSE, MY DEAR.

PRETTY EARLY FOR YOU TO COME DOWN FROM YOUR APARTMENT, SEBASTIAN. ANYTHING WRONG?

I WANTED TO CHECK ON YOUR RECOVERY FROM YOUR BATTLE WITH *THE BUTCHER*. I THOUGHT YOU'D BE TRAINING BY NOW.

FIGURED I'D TREAT MYSELF TO BREAKFAST WITH THESE LOVELY LADIES FIRST.

AND AVOID MY QUESTIONS. *WHEN* ARE WE STRIKING NEXT? AND *WHAT?*

IT'S SOMETHING I THOUGHT WE'D DISCUSS TOGETH--

LATER.

WE'LL DISCUSS IT LATER. I'M OFF TO TRAIN. YOU COMING?

...OF COURSE.

HSIMS

HSIMS

HSIMS

CLICK

ONE...

TWO...

THREE...

HSIMS

CASEY'S RIGHT, YOU KNOW.

YOU'RE READY TO GO BACK OUT THERE.

HELL, YOU COULD HAVE TAKEN YOUR BANDAGES OFF *DAYS* AGO.

I KNOW, I KNOW... IT'S JUST...

...*THIS* HAS BEEN REALLY NICE. BREAKFAST... TRAINING ...VIDEO GAMES... IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME SINCE I'VE BEEN ABLE TO BREATHE THIS *EASY*.

SINCE THERE'S BEEN A SENSE OF *FAMILY* IN MY LIFE. THE FEAR SEEMS SO FAR AWAY WHEN I'M WITH THEM. IT'S STUPID, I KNOW...

THERE IS *NOTHING* STUPID ABOUT THAT, CALVIN. I'VE ENJOYED THIS, MYSELF. IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME SINCE I'VE SEEN THIS KIND OF *JOY* IN MY LIFE.

THIS IS WHAT WE'RE FIGHTING *FOR*, MY BOY. BREAKFAST WITH LOVED ONES. A RELAXING EVENING IN FRONT OF THE TELEVISION...

WHEN WE'RE FINISHED, THIS *CAN* BE YOUR LIFE. *FOREVER*.

AFTER THE NEXT TARGET, I'M NOT SO SURE... I DON'T KNOW HOW WELL CASEY IS GOING TO TAKE OUR DESTROYING *SECURITUS*.

IT'S HER FATHER'S LEGACY...THE ONLY THING OF HIM SHE HAS *LEFT*.

IT'S THE BIGGEST GOVERNMENT-CONTRACTED SECURITY COMPANY ON THE PLANET, AND ONE OF THE COURT'S STRONGEST ASSETS.

WE NEED TO TAKE IT *AWAY* FROM THEM.

I'M NOT ARGUING THAT, SEBASTIAN... I JUST THINK...MAYBE WE COULD DO SOMETHING *SMALLER* FIRST? TO EASE HER INTO IT?

ARE YOU *KIDDING* ME?

YOU THINK I'D HAVE A PROBLEM DESTROYING THE COMPANY THAT DROVE MY FATHER INSANE?

BUT YOUR FATHER--

SPENT THE LAST THREE DECADES OF HIS LIFE IN *CONSTANT* FEAR OF THE COURT.

HOW DO YOU THINK HE'D FEEL, KNOWING THEY OWN EVERYTH NG HE EVER BUILT? THAT THEY TRIED TO *KILL* HIS DAUGHTER AND GRANDDAUGHTER ALONG THE WAY?

THIS IS THE BATTLE I'VE BEEN WAITING SEVEN YEARS FOR, CALV.N.

LET'S GET TO WORK.

GOTHAM CITY...ABOVE GROUND.

THIS IS UNACCEPTABLE, HARMON. IT'S BEEN TWO WEEKS SINCE YOUR FAILURE IN NEW YORK AND YOU STILL HAVE **NOTHING.**

I HAVE TOLD YOU BEFORE. CALVIN ROSE IS IN GOTHAM.

YOU KEEP MAKING EXCUSES. YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE ONE OF THE BEST TRACKERS WE EVER HAD.

WHY AREN'T YOU **TRACKING?**

HE IS IN HIDING. BIDING HIS TIME. WHEN HE MOVES AGAIN I'LL HAVE HIM. I CANNOT TRACK SOMETHING THAT IS NOT MOVING.

AND THAT **SATISFIES** YOU? WAITING? YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE BETTER THAN THIS.

YOUR MASTERS ARE DISAPPOINTED IN YOU.

FIND CALVIN ROSE. DO IT **NOW.** DO WHATEVER IT TAKES, OR WE'LL THROW YOU BACK IN THE GROUND AND LET YOU **ROT.** DO YOU HEAR US?

DO YOU HEAR US?!

YES, MASTERS.

CRUNCH

KNOCK KNOCK

HMM. WHO DO YOU THINK THAT COULD BE?

I DON'T KNOW, DEAR. I WASN'T EXPECTING ANYONE.

PARDON MY INTRUSION...THIS HAS BEEN AN EXCEPTIONALLY POOR DAY.

I THOUGHT I MIGHT PERMIT MYSELF A LITTLE FUN.

SECURITUS ISLAND. FOUR MILES OUT FROM GOTHAM HARBOR. MY FATHER USED TO CALL IT "*THE FORTRESS.*" HONESTLY, THAT'S A BIT OF AN UNDER-STATEMENT.

I MANAGED TO GET MY HANDS ON THE SCHEMATICS. I HAVE SOME IDEAS--

THROW THEM AWAY, SEBASTIAN. THEY'RE A TOTAL FABRICATION. NO *COMPLETE* SET OF SCHEMATICS EXISTS.

MY FATHER DESIGNED THE SECURITUS HEADQUARTERS IN THIRTY-SEVEN DIFFERENT PHASES, WITH THIRTY-SEVEN DIFFERENT CONTRACTORS OVER FIFTEEN YEARS. HE DESTROYED ALL RECORDS OF EACH SEGMENT AS IT WAS COMPLETED.

THAT'S INSANE.

THAT'S *NOTHING.* THE ISLAND IS DESIGNED TO BE COMPLETELY IMPENETRABLE. THE SECTIONS AREN'T EVEN CONNECTED FOR THE MOST PART, ASIDE FROM TUNNELS TO THE MAIN ENTRANCE.

THERE ARE NO PHONE LINES. THERE IS NO CONNECTION TO OUTSIDE COMPUTER NETWORKS. AND THE ISLAND NEUTRALIZES ALL WIRELESS COMMUNICATION WITHIN A HALF MILE.

MEANING NO RADIO CONTACT WITH YOU TWO WHILE I'M WORKING MY WAY IN.

I MIGHT HAVE A WORKAROUND THERE...BUT I CAN'T GUARANTEE ANYTHING.

GREAT. SO HOW DO WE GET IN?

THAT'S WHERE THIS GETS INTERESTING...

"...MY FATHER DISCUSSED THE FORTRESS WITH ME ONCE.

"IT WAS MY SEVENTH BIRTHDAY."

I WANT TO SEE MY DAD.

YOUR FATHER IS BUSY

NO...NO. LET HER IN.

I FIGURED IT OUT! I FINALLY FIGURED IT OUT, CASEY.

WHAT DID YOU FIGURE OUT?

HOW TO KEEP... HOW TO KEEP THOSE *MONSTERS* AWAY FROM WHAT I'VE BUILT. HOW TO KEEP THEM OUT *FOREVER.*

COME SEE. COME AND *SEE.*

I SPENT SO MUCH TIME THINKING ABOUT THE SKY. THEY'RE BIRDS, YOU SEE? THEY'D FLY. BUT NOT HERE. ALL THE OUTER SURFACES ARE...THEY'RE *ELECTRIFIED.* LETHAL. POWERED BY THE SUN.

AND IF THEY DROPPED A BOMB, THE COMPUTERS WIPE THEMSELVES OUT. THEY'LL GET NOTHING AND THEY KNOW IT, SO THEY WON'T DARE.

BUT WHAT ABOUT THE WATER, CASEY? OWLS CAN'T USUALLY SWIM, BUT I BET *THESE* OWLS CAN.

I... I DON'T KNOW...

I FIGURED IT OUT! I'LL SHOW YOU

DAD...IT'S MY BIRTHDAY PRESENT FROM YOU. YOUR SECRETARY--

SHH. WATCH.

THE *TURBINES*... YOU CAN'T EVEN TELL, CAN YOU?

IT'S HAPPENING UNDERWATER THE CHURNING, CHURNING, CHURNING...IT'S SO FAST, SO SUBTLE, BUT THE UNDERTOW...

...LOOK. LOOK WHAT IT CAN DO.

DICED AND CHOPPED...OR SHOCKED. NO WAY IN.

IT'S SAFE. TOTALLY *SAFE.*

GEEZ, CASEY...

THE TURBINES HAVE NO EXTERNAL CONTROLS. THEY TURN OFF IF ONE OF THE SECURITUS BOATS IS IN PROXIMITY AT THE EXACT MOMENT IT'S SUPPOSED TO BE.

SO WE'LL PLANT HIM AS AN EMPLOYEE ON ONE OF THE BOATS.

NO. THEY'LL SCAN HIM AT THE ENTRANCE. DNA RECOGNITION.

AND EVEN IF WE BYPASSED THAT, ONLY THE CURRENT *CEO* COULD WALK THROUGH ALL THE AREAS OF THE BASE TO PLANT THE BOMBS WE NEED.

SO WE COPY HIM?

I HAVE NO IDEA WHO THE CURRENT CEO OF SECURITUS IS... THEIR GOVERNMENT WORK HAS AFFORDED THEM FRUSTRATING DEGREES OF ANONYMITY.

I MIGHT BE ABLE TO FIND OUT MORE THERE, TOO, BUT WE WON'T KNOW UNTIL YOU'RE ON THE ISLAND.

HRM.

PRETTY MUCH, YEAH.

THE TURBINES. THEY'D NEED A RUN-OFF TUNNEL. RIGHT?

NOTHING YOU COULD GET UP TO THE MAIN BASE FROM WITHOUT THE RIGHT DNA IDENTIFICATION.

THAT DOESN'T MATTER. YOU SAID YOUR FATHER BUILT THE COMPUTERS TO WIPE THEMSELVES OUT, RIGHT? IF A BOMB HIT?

YOU KNOW... SOMETIMES YOU'RE SMARTER THAN YOU LOOK.

YOU'LL HAVE TO FORGIVE ME...A POOR JOB REVIEW AND IT'S ALL I CAN DO TO STOP SEEING RED.

I THINK I KILLED HERE ONCE BEFORE...I WOULD HAVE BEEN FOURTEEN AT THE TIME. PERHAPS I REMEMBER POORLY.

IT'S FUNNY, THOUGH. HOW LITTLE THESE DAMN OWLS UNDERSTAND.

I'VE TRACKED THIS ROSE VERMIN DOWN TO THE BLOCK. HE'LL MOVE SOONER OR LATER. AND THEN...

...WELL, I SUPPOSE YOU HAVE A GOOD IDEA OF WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO HIM THEN, DON'T YOU?

SECURITUS

ENTERING THE DEAD ZONE NOW... START-- SWI-ZZZT

BA DEP

CASEY? SEBASTIAN? DO YOU REGISTER?

YES! GOT YOU. AND WE'VE GOT ACCESS TO THEIR INTERNAL NETWORK... UPLOADING-- N-ZZTT

DAMN...WE LOST THE SIGNAL AGAIN. THEIR RADIO BLOCKING TECHNOLOGY IS STRONGER THAN I EXPECTED. HE'S ON HIS OWN NOW.

DID YOU GET ANYTHING FROM THEIR NETWORK, AT LEAST?

BARELY. JUST THE ACCESS CLEARANCES OF THE EMPLOYEES.

HUH. THIS IS INTERESTING.

WHAT?

LOOKS LIKE I'VE FOUND OUR MYSTERIOUS CEO...SOME GUY NAMED *JOHN WYCLIFFE*.

NO...

WE HAVE TO GET HIM *BACK!* WE HAVE TO GET CALVIN BACK *NOW!*

WHAT? IS THIS WYCLIFFE SOME KIND OF COURT STOOGE?

JOHN WYCLIFFE IS THE CURRENT *GRANDMASTER* OF THE *COURT OF OWLS!*

HOWEVER DANGEROUS WE THOUGHT THIS MISSION WAS GOING TO BE, WE WERE *WRONG!*

"IF WE CAN'T REACH HIM, CALVIN IS GOING TO *DIE* DOWN THERE!"

DO YOU READ ME? I REPEAT, CASEY? SEBASTIAN? DO YOU READ ME?

DAMMIT.

CLIK

SHUNK

TUT TUT, MR. ROSE.

YOU SHOULD HAVE *STAYED* IN HIDING.

BUT GRANDFATHER, THEN WE WOULDN'T GET TO *PLAY* WITH HIM TONIGHT. WHAT WOULD BE THE FUN IN *THAT?*

YES, SON... THIS SHOULD BE A TREAT FOR *ALL* OF US.

CHURNING

SCOTT SNYDER AND JAMES TYNION IV PLOT
JAMES TYNION IV DIALOGUE
GUILLEM MARCH ART AND COVER
TOMEU MOREY COLOR DEZI SIENTY LETTERS
KATIE KUBERT EDITOR MIKE MARTS GROUP EDITOR

SEBASTIAN CLARK'S UNDERGROUND COMPOUND...

ARE YOU GETTING A SIGNAL, CASEY? *ANYTHING?!*

I DON'T UNDERSTAND, SEBASTIAN... WHAT'S GOING ON?

CALVIN IS *TRAPPED* ON THAT ISLAND WITH JOHN WYCLIFFE! THE *GRANDMASTER OF THE COURT OF OWLS!* WE HAVE TO GET HIM OUT BEFORE THEY RIP HIM APART!

AND HOW EXACTLY *DO* YOU KNOW ABOUT JOHN WYCLIFFE? THERE'S NOTHING TO SUGGEST HE'S ANYTHING MORE THAN A STOOGE.

IT'S ON THE COURT DATABASE, CASEY. THAT'S NOT WHAT'S IMPORTANT NOW. FIND A WAY TO GET A SIGNAL!

COOL YOUR JETS, OLD MAN. I'VE ALREADY TOLD YOU IT'S *IMPOSSIBLE*. BUT YOU SAID IT YOURSELF. CALVIN'S *TRAPPED*. THAT HAPPENS TO BE HIS EXPERTISE.

HAVE A LITTLE FAITH IN HIM...

IN THE BOWELS OF SECURITUS ISLAND...

"...I CAN'T IMAGINE HE'S IN OVER HIS HEAD *ALREADY.*"

GRANDMASTER

PLOT BY SCOTT SNYDER AND JAMES TYNION IV
WRITTEN BY JAMES TYNION IV ART BY GUILLEM MARCH
COLORS BY TOMEU MOREY LETTERS BY DEZI SIENTY
COVER BY MARCH AND MOREY
KATIE KUBERT EDITOR MIKE MARTS GROUP EDITOR

IT'S TROUBLING, ISN'T IT, SON? SEEING THE REFUSE THEY STRING TOGETHER AND CALL **TALONS** THESE DAYS.

YES, FATHER.

MY DISAPPOINTMENT NEVER ENDS. IF AN **O'MALLEY** HAD BEEN WEARING THAT SUIT, THE COURT WOULD NEVER HAVE HAD SUCH DIFFICULTY.

SO THIS IS SOME KIND OF TWISTED *FAMILY LEGACY*, IS IT?

IF NOT FOR THE DISGUSTING FAILURE OF MY GRANDSON, NATHANIEL, TO SECURE AN HEIR, THE COURT WOULD HAVE ENJOYED THE **ETERNAL** SERVICE OF MY BLOODLINE.

NATHANIEL, HUH? GUESSING THAT'D BE *THIS* POOR GUY OVER HERE.

=UGGK=

AND WHICHEVER ONE *YOU* ARE. PAPA TALON OR GRANDPA? DOESN'T REALLY MATTER. JUST NEED TO GET THE *PRESSURE* OFF THE GROUND.

NICE THING ABOUT AN OLD-SCHOOL SECURITUS *PRESSURE TRAP*. IT'S SMARTER THAN IT LOOKS, BUT NOT BY MUCH. IT SENSES PRESSURE FOR A FEW FEET ALL AROUND THE TRIGGER.

BUT CONVINCE IT THAT NO ONE'S THERE?

THINGS RESET PRETTY QUICKLY.

BUT THAT'S BESIDE THE POINT...

HOW INSANE *ARE* YOU PEOPLE? HOW COULD YOU KEEP INFLICTING THAT PAIN ON GENERATION AFTER GENERATION?

THE STRONG-WILLED FEEL NO PAIN, MR. ROSE. MY FAMILY IS STRONG-WILLED.

OUR KNIVES WON'T CUT THE WIRE!

YOUR INCOMPETENCE NEVER FAILS TO ASTONISH ME, NATHANIEL.

THE TRAITOR'S KNIFE SHOULD DO THE TRICK. DOUBTFUL AN ESCAPIST WOULDN'T HAVE A WAY OUT OF HIS OWN TRAP. A SLIPPERY TRADE IF I EVER KNEW ONE.

THANK YOU, GRANDFATHER.

BRMMMMM

QUIET, NATHANIEL. AND STAY OUT OF THE WAY. LEAVE THE MEN TO SETTLE THIS.

WHRRRRRKKKKKKKK

MEH. OR PERHAPS THIS MAD PLACE WILL DO IT FOR US.

THE TURBINES HAVE REACTIVATED. IT WON'T BE LONG BEFORE THESE TUNNELS FLOOD. MR. ROSE HAS NO PLACE TO GO. HE'LL DROWN AND WE CAN COLLECT THE BODY.

NO! HE'LL GET AWAY. WE HAVE TO GET HIM NOW.

IDIOT CHILD! THERE'S NO TIME!

NO..

THIS WON'T BE PLEASANT, ROSE. I PROMISE YOU THAT.

DOUBT IT WILL BE ALL THAT MUCH BETTER FOR *YOU*, EITHER.

WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU TALKING--

--OH.

CRASH

MEANWHILE, IN THE COMPOUND...

MOMMY? WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

HOPING MY INSTINCTS ARE WRONG, BABY. BEEN THROUGH THESE COURT FILES UP AND DOWN IN THE LAST FEW WEEKS...

WHAT?

IT'S NOTHING, SARAH. DO YOU KNOW WHERE MR. CLARK IS?

HE'S BREAKING THINGS IN THE TRAINING ROOM. I THINK HE'S ANGRY. SHOULD I GO SEE IF HE WANTS A FRIEND?

ABSOLUTELY *NOT*. WHY DON'T YOU GO PLAY IN OUR ROOM FOR A WHILE? OKAY?

YEAH, OKAY...

COMPUTER, ACCESS COURT OF OWLS DATABASE.

SEARCH ALL FILES FOR *JOHN WYCLIFFE*.

-GASP!-

IT'S A FALSE OUTLET ROSE. IT GOES UP A FEW HUNDRED FEET AND THEN THE RUNGS BECOME ELECTRIFIED.

THERE'S NO WAY OUT EXCEPT THROUGH ME.

SHULK

YEAH, WELL, YOUR BODY CAN'T HANDLE THE FREEZING WATER TEMPERATURE IN HERE FOR MORE THAN A FEW MINUTES, TALON. SO DON'T PRETEND YOU HAVE THE UPPER HAND HERE.

LOOK, KID...

DON'T CALL ME "KID." I'M A CENTURY OLDER THAN YOU...

AND FROM THE AGE WE DIED, I'M ONLY THREE YEARS YOUNGER THAN MY FATHER, AND TWO OLDER THAN MY DAMNED GRANDFATHER.

I AM NOT A CHILD.

THEN WHY ARE YOU *ACTING* LIKE ONE?

WHY DO YOU CONTINUE TO SEEK THEIR APPROVAL, WHEN CLEARLY YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE WHO WAS SMART ENOUGH NOT TO BRING A CHILD INTO THIS LIFE?

YEAH, I THOUGHT SO. THEY THINK YOU'RE *WEAK.*

NOT ENOUGH OF A *MAN* TO KNOCK UP SOME GIRL AND THROW A KID INTO A LIFE WHERE THEY'D BE A SLAVE TO THESE MONSTERS. BUT IT WAS A CHOICE, RIGHT?

...YES.

THEN STOP PLAYING THEIR STUPID GAME. YOU KNEW THE COURT WAS EVIL WHEN YOU WERE A YOUNG MAN. YOU *STILL* KNOW IT.

IT'S TIME FOR YOU TO STAND UP, NATHANIEL.

SO HELP ME, DAMMIT.

HELP ME STOP THE COURT!

MEANWHILE, IN UPTOWN GOTHAM...

CAN YOU HEAR ME?

WHAT'S-- ZZZZT-- WITH THE CONNECTION, HARMON?

— THE DEVICE HAS BEEN DAMAGED. I WILL REQUIRE ANOTHER. BUT I HAVE NEWS.

YOU FOUND CALVIN ROSE? FINALLY...WE WERE BEGINNING TO THINK--

NOT ROSE. SOMETHING BETTER. I HAD A LITTLE DIVERSION WHILE I WAS WAITING ON YOUR RENEGADE TALON TO REEMERGE.

THAT DIVERSION HAS ATTRACTED GREATER PREY.

HOW WOULD YOU LIKE ME TO KILL THE BAT-MAN?

WHAT?! STAND DOWN. STAND DOWN THIS INSTANT. GET AS FAR AWAY AS POSSIBLE. WE CAN'T RISK GETTING THE BATMAN'S ATTENTION!

— YOUR FEAR IS DISGUSTING. THIS IS A SMALL MAN WITH A RIDICULOUS CAPE. I COULD CRUSH HIS SKULL IN MY HAND IN A MATTER OF MINUTES.

YOU WILL STAND DOWN, FELIX!

IF YOU COWARDS WON'T MAKE THIS CALL, I'LL MAKE IT FOR YOU.

NO YOU WON'T. REMEMBER, YOU DAMN **BUTCHER**, WE PLANTED **CRYOBOMBS** IN YOUR SKULL BEFORE YOU WERE REANIMATED.

ALL IT TAKES IS A FLICK OF A BUTTON ON OUR END, AND THE LITTLE CAPSULES BEHIND YOUR EYES WILL **FLASH FREEZE** YOUR BRAIN. ARE YOU LISTENING?

...YES.

YOU WILL **LEAVE** THE PREMISES NOW. LIE LOW AND THEN CONTINUE YOUR HUNT FOR CALVIN ROSE.

HE IS YOUR **ONLY** PRIORITY. WE'RE WATCHING YOU, FELIX. WE EXPECT YOUR OBEDIENCE, AND TO SEE YOUR TARGET ELIMINATED.

THAT IS ALL. UNDERSTOOD?

HMPH. AS YOU WISH.

WHAT'S YOUR TAKE, JIM?

I'D SAY THE VICTIMS WERE ***BLUNGEONED***, BUT I CAN'T GIVE A GUESS AS TO WHO DID IT. THE HAND SIZE IS LUDICROUS.

YOU GET ON THE BAD SIDE OF ONE OF THE GORILLAS IN THE GOTHAM ZOO OR SOMETHING, BATMAN?

YEAH. THOUGHT NOT.

HRRM.

RIGHT BEHIND THE EYES, THEY SAID...

...LET'S SEE.

A FAILURE, BRANDON. YOUR SON IS A FAILURE AS MUCH IN THIS SECOND LIFE AS IN THE FIRST.

HE'S YOUR BLOOD AS MUCH AS MINE, FATHER.

A TALON SHOULD BE SUBSERVIENT TO HIS BETTERS, AND HE IS NOT OUR BETTER...

WE'LL SCOUR THE TUNNELS WHEN THE WATER RECEDES AND COLLECT HIS BODY FOR RESURRECTION. SAY IT WAS ROSE WHO STRUCK HIM DOWN.

WHY SHOULD WE SHIELD HIS IDIOCY FROM THE COURT?

WOULD YOU WANT AN O'MALLEY INTERRED WITH THE REST OF THE UNWORTHY? NO. WE PROTECT OUR OWN.

WE SHOULD SAVE OUR PROTECTION FOR THOSE WHO'VE EARNED IT, SON.

GRANDFATHER...

...YOU SHOULD HAVE A LITTLE MORE FAITH IN YOUR PROGENY.

WELL DONE, MY BOY. LIKE A TRUE O'MALLEY.

HMPH.

COME NOW. IT'S TIME TO TAKE THIS SCUM TO MEET HIS TRUE MASTER.

BACK IN THE COMPOUND...

AND *THIS* ONE IS CALLED *TINYPUP* 'CAUSE HE'S A LITTLE DOG THING, I GUESS. BUT HE EVOLVES INTO A BIG BEARDY DOG THING CALLED *HOUNDLAND!*

ARE YOU LISTENING, MR. CLARK?

YES, OF COURSE, DEAR.

GOOD. BECAUSE I HAVE, LIKE, A WHOLE BUNCH MORE OF THESE GUYS. AND THEY'RE *ALL* AWESOME.

DAMMIT, SARAH...

DESTINATION?

PENTHOUSE.

ACCESS DENIED.

INPUT OVERRIDE. DELTA EPSILON 759.

SHOULD HAVE KNOWN BETTER THAN TO LEAVE A WASHINGTON ALONE IN A ROOM WITH A SUPER-COMPUTER...

MR. WYCLIFFE, WE FOUND ROSE IN THE TUNNELS AS YOU SUSPECTED.

AH, YES. JAMES, BRANDON AND NATHANIEL. THE COURT HAS ALWAYS BEEN THANKFUL FOR THE *SERVICE* OF THE O'MALLEYS.

AT THIS MOMENT MORE THAN EVER. WHY DON'T YOU *WAKE* OUR *GUEST?*

UUUU...

AAHH!

WHERE THE HELL AM I?!

YOU ARE IN THE EXECUTIVE OFFICES ON *SECURITUS ISLAND.*

HELLO, CALVIN. IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME SINCE THE NIGHT I FIRST SAW YOU, SCUFFLING W TH YOUR PREDECESSOR DOWN IN THE *LABYRINTH.*

AND THE WAY YOU BROKE INTO *HARBOR HOUSE!* YOUR SKILLS DELIGHTED US ALL. WE SAW SUCH *POTENTIAL* IN YOU.

YEAH, WELL, SORRY TO DISAPPOINT.

DISAPPOINT? WHATEVER ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT, CALVIN?

I SUPPOSE THERE WERE THOSE REGRETTABLE YEARS ON THE *RUN*... YOUR *DALLIANCE* WITH THE YOUNG MS. WASHINGTON...

THOSE WEREN'T YOUR FINEST MOMENTS, I'LL GIVE YOU THAT. BUT WE STILL GOT WHAT WE WANTED IN THE END, DIDN'T WE?

THE FACT THAT THE *GRANDMASTER* OF THE COURT OF OWLS IS SITTING AS THE CEO OF SECURITUS ONLY *PROVES* IT.

GRANDMASTER? *YOU'RE* THE BASTARD WHO *RECRUITED* ME?

ALAS, IT WAS NOT ME WHO HAD THAT GLORIOUS BIT OF INSIGHT.

I'VE ONLY RECENTLY COME INTO THE POSITION. BUT SURELY YOU ALREADY KNEW THAT.

WHY WOULD I KNOW *THAT?*

WHY *WOULDN'T* YOU! YOU'VE BEEN DOING SUCH TREMENDOUS WORK FOR THE COURT THESE LAST FEW MONTHS.

...WHAT?

SEBASTIAN CLARK'S PENTHOUSE.

DAMN, SEBASTIAN, I KNEW YOU OWNED THE BUILDING, BUT YOU'VE BEEN HOLDING OUT ON US...

...NOW, IF I WERE AN OLD MAN, WHERE WOULD I HIDE SOMETHING?

BINGO.

CLARK

CLARK

OKAY...NOW LET'S SEE IF I CAN REMEMBER DAD'S OLD MASTER OVERRIDE...

DING

WHRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRR

I DON'T BUY THIS FOR A SECOND.

WHAT'S TO *BUY?*

WHY WOULD YOU SEND A *FREAK* LIKE HARMON AFTER ME IF I WAS WORKING FOR THE COURT ALL THIS TIME?

WHY WOULD YOU BE BACK IN YOUR TALON REGALIA IF YOU *WEREN'T?*

WE WERE TRYING TO SEND A *MESSAGE.*

AH, YES. *SEBASTIAN* DOES LOVE HIS MESSAGES, DOESN'T HE?

HOW DO YOU KNOW THAT *NAME?!*

IS THIS SOME KIND OF *JOKE,* CALVIN? IF IT IS, I FAIL TO SEE THE HUMOR.

WHAT DID YOU THINK WAS HAPPENING ALL THIS TIME?

WE WERE STRIKING AT YOUR *RESOURCES.*

YOU WERE *RECLAIMING* RESOURCES FOR A BITTER OLD FOOL WHO SHOULD KNOW BETTER

WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU TRYING TO SAY?

HMM... YOU REALLY DON'T KNOW, DO YOU? WELL... SOME MONTHS AGO, OUR ORGANIZATION HIT A BIT OF A SETBACK.

ONE OF OUR MEMBERS, IN ALLIANCE WITH MY PREDECESSOR, PITTED US DIRECTLY AGAINST THE VIGILANTE KNOWN AS ***BATMAN.*** IT DIDN'T GO VERY WELL.

THE MEMBER IN QUESTION ULTIMATELY ***KILLED*** TWENTY-THREE OF US BEFORE LEAVING THE CITY. THE REST OF US DECIDED IT WAS TIME FOR ***NEW*** LEADERSHIP.

OUR FORMER LEADER VANISHED BEFORE WE COULD DO AWAY WITH HIM. BUT IT WASN'T LONG BEFORE HIS INTENTIONS WERE MADE CLEAR TO US.

THIS IS SOME KIND OF TRICK.

IT CERTAINLY IS. NOT BY MY HAND. AS I SAID, YOU'VE BEEN OPERATING AS A TALON OF THE COURT ALL THIS TIME, BUT NOT UNDER THE ***TRUE*** GRANDMASTER.

YOU'RE ***LYING!***

THAT'S NOT EVEN THE BEST PART, CALVIN.

"ALL THIS TIME YOU'VE BEEN WORKING FOR THE MAN WHO *RECRUITED* YOU AS A BOY. THE MAN WHO BROUGHT YOU INTO THIS LIFE.

"THE *FORMER* GRANDMASTER OF THE COURT OF OWLS.

"SEBASTIAN CLARK."

REVELATIONS

STORY BY SCOTT SNYDER AND JAMES TYNION IV

WRITTEN BY JAMES TYNION IV

ART BY GUILLEM MARCH

COLORS BY TOMEU MOREY

LETTERED BY DEZI SIENTY

COVER BY GUILLEM MARCH AND TOMEU MOREY

KATIE KUBERT EDITOR

MIKE MARTS GROUP EDITOR

SEBASTIAN CLARK'S PENTHOUSE...

CALVIN...YOU WON'T RECEIVE THIS MESSAGE UNTIL YOU'RE BACK IN GOTHAM. DO NOT MAKE CONTACT UNTIL YOU'VE LISTENED TO WHAT I HAVE TO SAY.

I'VE JUST DISCOVERED EVIDENCE THAT *SEBASTIAN CLARK* IS OR WAS A *MEMBER* OF THE *COURT OF OWLS.*

HE'S BEEN *LYING* TO US THE ENTIRE TIME.

LYING ABOUT THINGS YOU'RE NOT GOING TO LIKE.

PROUDLY PRESENT

THE YOUNGEST ESCAPE ARTIST IN AMERICA

PLAY DUMB WHEN YOU GET IN. WE'LL D SCUSS IT WHEN HE GOES TO BED TONIGHT. AND WHAT WE'LL DO--

OH, MY DEAR...

...YOU'VE JUST MADE A *TERRIBLE* MISTAKE.

SMACK

SECURITUS ISLAND.

THAT'S RIGHT, *CALVIN ROSE.*

YOUR BELOVED FRIEND AND MENTOR, SEBASTIAN CLARK, WAS THE FORMER *GRANDMASTER* OF THE COURT OF OWLS.

HE *CHOSE* YOU TO BE OUR TALON.

HE FIXATED ON YOU. HE ALWAYS DID HARP ON ABOUT HUNTING YOU DOWN AND BRINGING YOU BACK...

THIS IS A TRICK. YOU'RE TRYING TO *TRICK* ME.

DID HE TELL YOU THE SOB STORY ABOUT HIS *FATHER'S BOOK?* THAT MUST BE IT. HOW HIS FAMILY WAS SLAUGHTERED AND HIS LIFE RUINED.

IT'S TRUE, YOU KNOW...DADDY CLARK DID WRITE A TELL-ALL ABOUT THE COURT. BUT SEBASTIAN WAS THE MAN WHO TURNED HIM *IN.*

HE GAVE OVER HIS FAMILY IN EXCHANGE FOR MEMBERSHIP. HE ROSE UP OVER THE YEARS, AND EVENTUALLY TOOK THE TOP JOB. NOW IT SEEMS HE WANTS IT *BACK.*

I DON'T BELIEVE ANY OF THIS.

WHY ELSE WOULD YOUR FIRST MISSION HAVE BEEN TO RETRIEVE THE MASK OF THE GRANDMASTERS? MY *TRUE* MASK. NOT THIS CONVENTIONAL PIECE.

THAT WAS HIS CALL TO *WAR.* AND NOW WE'LL ANSWER IN KIND.

SLIT HIS THROAT, JAMES--YOU'RE THE ELDEST. WE CAN CONTINUE THIS CONVERSATION WHEN WE DRAG HIM *BACK* OUT OF HIS GRAVE.

NO, GRAND-MASTER. I'LL DO IT.

LEAVE THIS TO YOUR *BETTERS,* GRANDSON.

SEE, CALVIN? SEE HOW YOUR PREDECESSORS *HATE* YOU? SEE HOW THEY *BEG* FOR THE CHANCE TO KILL YOU?

VERY WELL, SON. NATHANIEL, RIGHT? THE YOUNGEST OF THE O'MALLEY BROOD.

YES, SIR. I SERVED THE COURT LOYALLY AFTER MY FATHER AND HIS FATHER BEFORE HIM. I SERVE AGAIN NOW, AT THEIR SIDE.

AS MUCH AS THEY DEMEAN MY WORK, I KNOW WHAT I AM CAPABLE OF.

I'M EAGER TO *SHOW* THEM.

?!

THWACK

WHAT THE...?

YOU KNOW WHAT, GRANDFATHER? I HAD PLENTY OF OPPORTUNITIES TO SIRE AN HEIR, BUT I PASSED UP EACH AND EVERY ONE.

I WAS THRILLED TO BE THE LAST O'MALLEY TO FALL INTO THIS LIFE. I WOULD RATHER HAVE DIED THAN INFLICT IT UPON ANOTHER!

THAT CAN STILL BE ARRANGED, SON.

NO, I DON'T THINK SO, POPS.

I'VE ALWAYS KNOWN YOU WERE **WEAK**, NATHANIEL. BUT I DIDN'T KNOW HOW DEEP YOUR SICKNESS RAN.

WHAM

TAKE THIS. AIM AT THE FEET.

WHAT--?

I CALL THEM *ICE CUBES.*

FLASH-FREEZES THE SURFACE OF AN OBJECT, OR *TALON* IN THIS CASE.

WON'T BE ENOUGH TO SHUT THEM DOWN FOR MORE THAN A MINUTE...

...BUT THAT'S ALL THE TIME WE NEED!

WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO *ACCOMPLISH?* THERE'S NO ESCAPING THIS ISLAND.

HOW MUCH DO YOU REALLY KNOW ABOUT THIS PLACE, JOHN WYCLIFFE?

FOR INSTANCE, DO YOU KNOW WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN TO YOUR COMPUTER SYSTEMS WHEN THE *BOMB* WE PLANTED BENEATH THIS ISLAND GOES OFF?

TIC

KABOOOM

RUMMBLE

YOU THINK THIS PLACE CAN'T HANDLE A BOMB?

OH, I *KNOW* IT CAN.

BUT ERIC WASHINGTON WAS SO PARANOID WHEN HE BUILT IT THAT HE WIRED THE NETWORK TO WIPE ITSELF COMPLETELY CLEAN AT THE FIRST SIGN OF AN ATTACK.

EVERY PIECE OF HIS DATA THAT YOU'VE BEEN PICKING AWAY AT FOR THE LAST SEVEN YEARS IS NOW *GONE.*

EVERY BACKUP IS WIPED. EVERYTHING THAT MADE THIS COMPANY WHAT IT ,S, IS *GONE.*

SECURITUS IS THE MOST SOPHISTICATED SECURITY HARDWARE COMPANY IN THE WORLD. I *REFUSE* TO BELIEVE THAT ITS NETWORKS...

NO... *NO!*

CRAK

EMERGENCY ESCAPE PROTOCOL INITIATED

WHAT THE--?

GET OFF ME!

WHAT THE HELL IS HAPPENING?

THERE IS A WAY OUT. EX-SECURITUS *CEO* ERIC WASHINGTON BUILT HIMSELF AN ESCAPE ROUTE. A *LAST RESORT.*

AND *HE'S* SURE AS HELL NOT GOING TO BE THE ONE TAKING IT

AND NEITHER ARE YOU.

GUK.

THEY'RE BREAKING FREE! YOU HAVE TO GET OUT OF HERE!

SEEMS A BIT TOO LATE FOR THAT...

...LOOKS LIKE GOOD OLD ERIC HAD ONE LAST *TRICK* UP HIS SLEEVE FOR ME TO STEAL! FAREWELL, BOYS!

LAUNCH IN 3...

2...

1.

BANG

NO!

THE RUSE IS UP. THE GIRL FOUND MY MASK. GET HERE AS FAST AS YOU CAN... I HAVE A FEELING WE'RE JUST GETTING *STARTED.*

UNFF.

SEBASTIAN CLARK'S COMPUND

FRIEND OF YOURS? ANOTHER DAMN *OWL?*

NOT QUITE, MS. WASHINGTON. I FEAR YOU DON'T QUITE GRASP THE EXTENT OF WHAT YOU'VE UNCOVERED. BUT I HAVE TO SAY, I'M *RELIEVED* TO HAVE THIS EXCUSE.

IT WAS BAD ENOUGH WHEN CALVIN INSISTED THAT HE GO AFTER YOU, MOVING HIM OFF THE PLAN OF ATTACK I SPENT *MONTHS* BUILDING.

IT WAS WORSE WHEN HE BROUGHT YOU AND YOUR LITTLE *BRAT* INTO MY BASE.

YOU KNOW AS WELL AS I DO THAT YOU NEED ME *ALIVE* IF YOU HAVE ANY HOPE OF CONTROLLING CALVIN.

YES, DEAR. I'M NOT AN IDIOT.

COMPUTER. OPEN THE PANTRY.

CALVIN NEEDED SO MANY BONDAGE IMPLEMENTS TO PRACTICE HIS ART OF ESCAPEOLOGY.

SURELY ONE OF THESE WILL KEEP YOU SECURE UNTIL MY *PARTNER* AND I DETERMINE THE BEST COURSE OF ACTION.

THIS ONE ALWAYS GAVE ME THE WILLIES. SHALL WE GIVE IT A TRY?

COMPUTER. MASTER OVERRIDE BRAVO 539 TANGO 7.

LOCK THE PANTRY.

YOU SON OF A--!

COMPUTER. DISABLE VOICE COMMAND.

I CAN DO THE MATH, SEBASTIAN. IF YOU RECRUITED CALVIN, YOU PUT THE *HIT* ON ME. ON MY *DAUGHTER*.

YOU STOLE MY FATHER'S COMPANY.

AFTER GOING THROUGH ALL THAT, DO YOU REALLY THINK I WOULDN'T BE PARANOID ENOUGH TO BUILD FAIL-SAFES INTO ANY COMPUTER I ACCESS?

SO WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO ABOUT IT, CASEY?

WELL, I *AM* MY FATHER'S DAUGHTER. AND YOU'RE THE BASTARD WHO *MADE* ME THAT WAY.

I'M STEALING EVERYTHING YOU HAVE ON YOUR COMPUTERS. I DON'T KNOW OR CARE WHAT YOU WERE PLANNING, BUT I'LL FIGURE IT OUT WITH CALVIN AND END IT.

I'VE ALSO CUT THE *OXYGEN* SUPPLY TO THAT CELL. HOPEFULLY YOUR MYSTERIOUS PARTNER GETS BACK BEFORE YOU PASS OUT.

I SURE AS HELL WON'T BE STAYING TO WATCH.

MEANWHILE...

HOOBOY...

SMASH

SIGNAL RESTORED. INCOMING MESSAGE...

HM?

CALVIN... YOU WON'T RECEIVE THIS MESSAGE UNTIL YOU'RE BACK IN GOTHAM. DO NOT MAKE CONTACT UNTIL YOU'VE LISTENED TO WHAT I HAVE TO SAY.

I'VE JUST DISCOVERED EVIDENCE THAT **SEBASTIAN CLARK** IS OR WAS A **MEMBER** OF THE **COURT OF OWLS.** HE'S BEEN LYING TO US THE ENTIRE TIME.

LYING ABOUT THINGS YOU'RE NOT GOING TO LIKE. PLAY DUMB WHEN YOU GET IN. WE'LL DISCUSS IT WHEN HE GOES TO BED. AND WHAT WE'LL DO--

OH, MY DEAR... YOU'VE JUST MADE A **TERRIBLE** MISTAKE.

CASEY...

SORRY, WYCLIFFE. GOING TO HAVE TO TAKE A RAINCHECK.

I DON'T UNDERSTAND, MAMA! WHY ARE WE *LEAVING?*

C'MON, HONEY, WE'VE BEEN UNDERGROUND FOR WEEKS. AREN'T YOU READY FOR SOME *FRESH AIR?*

FRESH AIR IS *STUPID!*

HMPH.

WHIRRRRRR

WHIRRRRRR

BUT MOM, WHAT ABOUT MR. CLARK? WHAT ABOUT CALVIN?

SARAH... SOMETHING VERY *BAD* IS GOING ON, DO YOU UNDER-STAND?

NO.

BUT YOU REMEMBER WHAT MOMMY SAID TO DO WHEN THINGS GO *BAD?*

STAY QUIET, STAY CLOSE, AND KEEP MOVING.

DAMN STRAIGHT.

THIS IS CALVIN, CALLING IN. DO YOU READ ME?

PICK UP, CLARK! *DAMN YOU!*

WHUH?

-UNFF-

I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU *THINK* YOU'RE DOING...

...BUT I WILL *NOT* ALLOW TALONS TO OPERATE IN THIS CITY.

YOU DON'T *UNDERSTAND!* I'M NOT LIKE THE OTHERS.

YOUR NAME IS *CALVIN ROSE*. YOU WERE AN ESCAPE ARTIST AT *HALY'S CIRCUS* MANY YEARS AGO, WHERE YOU WERE RECRUITED TO BECOME AN ASSASSIN FOR THE COURT OF OWLS.

YOU HAVEN'T BEEN RESURRECTED, SO CLEARLY YOU'VE BEEN OPERATING ON YOUR OWN FOR THE LAST SEVERAL YEARS.

YES! I'M ON YOUR SIDE, DAMMIT! I'M WORKING TO *STOP* THE COURT!

EVERY TIME YOU ENGAGE THE COURT OF OWLS, YOU ARE RISKING THE *LIVES* OF EVERY PERSON IN THIS CITY.

YOU CLEARLY HAVE *NO IDEA* HOW RECKLESS YOU'RE BEING, AND I WILL *NOT* ALLOW YOU TO CONTINUE.

I DON'T HAVE TIME FOR THIS...

EXCUSE ME?

THE PEOPLE I LOVE ARE *IN DANGER* RIGHT NOW. I DON'T HAVE TIME FOR A SANCTIMONIOUS LECTURE FROM A MAN IN A BAT SUIT.

ZERO IN ON GPS. READY FOR PICKUP.

NO...

THAT'S TOO BAD.

THESE ARE WAYNETECH ULTRACLASP BONDS. A PROTOTYPE DESIGNED TO BE COMPLETELY *INESCAPABLE.* I TESTED THEM MYSELF. THERE'S NO GETTING OUT THIS TIME.

IMAGING SYSTEMS, GO

NFRADARK, NOW!

C'MON CAL. YOU'RE ALMOST THERE...

SCRAMBLE!

HRM.

CASEY!

SHE'S NOT HERE.

WHAT THE *HELL* DID YOU *DO* TO HER?!

WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

DON'T PLAY DUMB WITH ME, SEBASTIAN!

WHERE--

--IS--

--SHE?!

-:KOFF:- THAT WITCH LOCKED ME UP IN MY *OWN* BASE USING MY OWN COMPUTER, TOOK HER BRAT AND *LEFT.*

THERE. IS THAT WHAT YOU WANTED TO HEAR? SHE'S LONG GONE.

TELL ME IT ISN'T *TRUE*, SEBASTIAN. TELL ME YOU WEREN'T THE BASTARD WHO TOOK MY LIFE AWAY FROM ME.

TECHNICALLY IT WAS OUR *RECRUITER*. BUT YES, I MADE THE FINAL DECISION ONCE I SAW YOUR PROMISE.

I STILL REMEMBER THAT DAY YOU FIRST CAME TO HARBOR HOUSE. YOU SAID SOMETHING PARTICULARLY AMUSING ABOUT *RATS*.

I'LL KILL YOU!

NO. YOU WON'T. MY *PARTNER* WILL SEE TO THAT.

...HARMON?

NO.

SOMETHING FAR *WORSE.*

THIS IS THE MAN YOU PASSED MY SOLDIERS OVER FOR, CLARK?

YOU HAVEN'T SEEN WHAT HE CAN *DO*, BANE!

I'VE NEVER SEEN AN ESCAPIST ANYWHERE NEAR AS CAPABLE.

ESCAPISM?

THERE IS NO ESCAPE FROM *BANE.*

YOU HAVE PLAYED YOUR PART IN OUR PLAN, MR. ROSE, NEVER KNOWING YOUR *TRUE* ROLE. BUT NOW YOU HAVE OUTLIVED YOUR USEFULNESS.

NO MATTER WHAT YOU DO TO ME, I'LL GET FREE... I'LL HUNT YOU DOWN FOR THIS... *BOTH* OF YOU...

KDOK

NO. I DON'T THINK SO.

...

GOODBYE, CALVIN.

I'LL SEE YOU IN THE *NEXT* LIFE...

GOTHAM CITY PORT AUTHORITY...

=SIGH=

JUST KEEP TELLING YOURSELF IT'S GOING TO BE OKAY, CASEY

WHAT, MOM?

OH, HONEY, SOMETIMES GROWNUPS NEED TO TELL THEMSELVES THINGS THAT AREN'T TRUE, JUST TO MAKE THEM *FEEL* BETTER.

THINGS *AREN'T* GOING TO BE OKAY?

CALVIN'S COMM-LINK IS ACTIVE, WHICH MEANS HE'S BACK IN GOTHAM...BUT THERE'S NO ANSWER.

Huh?

IT DOESN'T MATTER, SARAH. IN JUST ANOTHER COUPLE MINUTES WE'LL CROSS THE STREET AND GET ON ONE OF THE BUSES. OKAY? MOMMY'S JUST NERVOUS.

SHE'S GOT THE FEELING SOMETHING VERY *BAD* IS GOING TO HAPPEN.

YES...

...SOMETHING VERY BAD, INDEED.

DON'T BE AFRAID OF THE DARK

WRITTEN BY JAMES TYNION IV
ART BY MIGUEL SEPULVEDA
COLORS BY RAIN BEREDO
LETTERED BY TAYLOR ESPOSITO
COVER BY GUILLEM MARCH AND TOMEU MOREY
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GET YOUR HANDS OFF MY DAUGHTER, BUTCHER!

NO, MY DEAR. I DON'T THINK I WILL.

YOU KNOW WHAT I AM, MS. WASHINGTON. YOUR LITTLE ICE GUN WOULD BARELY SLOW ME DOWN.

IT CERTAINLY WOULDN'T ROB ME OF THE JOY OF CRUSHING PRECIOUS LITTLE SARAH'S SKULL IN MY FIST.

WH-WHAT DO YOU *WANT*?!

VERY GOOD. YOU'RE A SMART ONE. TAKE ME TO YOUR BASE.

TAKE ME TO THE TALON CALVIN ROSE!

SEBASTIAN CLARK'S UNDERGROUND BUNKER...

NO!

CALVIN? CALVIN?!

CALVIN, YOU IDIOT...

WHAT'S *WRONG* WITH HIM, MAMA? WHAT'S GOING ON?

THEY *KILLED* HIM, HONEY.

THEY FINALLY KILLED HIM...

THE GOTHAM PUBLIC LIBRARY...

"CALVIN ROSE IS *DEAD.*

"KILLED BY AN *UNKNOWN ACCOMPLICE* OF OUR RENEGADE FORMER LEADER, *SEBASTIAN CLARK.* WHO HAS ESCAPED OUR GRASP. *AGAIN.*

"IN ADDITION, WE HAVE JUST LOST *DECADES* OF PATENTS AND SECURITIES CODING WITH THE DECIMATION OF *SECURITUS ISLAND. BILLIONS'* WORTH.

"WE HAVE HAUNTED THIS CITY FOR EONS. WITHSTOOD ORGANIZED CRIME, ETHICAL POLITICIANS AND EVEN A DAMNED *SUPERHERO.*"

NOCTIS AETERNUM.

"I CANNOT ACCEPT THAT WE'VE BEEN HAD BY SOME BACKWATER *ESCAPE ARTIST* AND AN OLD *FOOL.*

"WE ARE THE *COURT OF OWLS...*"

...AND THIS *WILL NOT STAND!*

BRING ME UP TO SPEED, OWL. WHAT CAN YOU TELL ME?

HIS COMPUTER SYSTEMS ARE WIPED CLEAN, GRANDMASTER WYCLIFFE. THERE'S NO WRITTEN RECORD OR *TRACE* OF ANY ALTERNATE IDENTITIES SEBASTIAN CLARK MIGHT HAVE IN USE.

NOT BEYOND THE ONE HE USED TO PURCHASE THE BUILDING AND CONSTRUCT HIS *SUBTERRANEAN BASE.*

AND MY MASK? THE *MASK* OF THE *GRAND-MASTERS?*

IT WOULD SEEM HE TOOK IT WITH HIM.

YOUR USELESSNESS IS COMPLETELY UNACCEPTABLE.

KEEP LOOKING. I HAVE OTHER THINGS TO TEND TO.

THE ELUSIVE *CASEY WASHINGTON*, I PRESUME!

WHERE IS MY *DAUGHTER?!*

SHE'S NOT BEEN COOPERATIVE, GRANDMASTER.

I CAN SEE THAT.

ARE THERE BACK-UPS TO THE DATA YOU AND YOUR BOYFRIEND *DESTROYED* AT SECURITUS ISLAND?

DAMN YOUR DATA. WHERE IS MY DAUGHTER?

LET'S TRY SOME-THING ELSE..

WHO WAS SEBASTIAN CLARK WORKING WITH? *WHO* KILLED CALVIN ROSE?

WHERE. IS. MY. DAUGH--

SMACK

"HIT ME ALL YOU WANT. THERE'S ONLY *ONE* PERSON WHO KNOWS WHAT YOU WANT TO KNOW.

"AND HE'S NOT EXACTLY *TALKATIVE* AT THE MOMENT."

YOU COST ME FIFTEEN-*BILLION* DOLLARS IN THE LAST TWENTY-FOUR HOURS, MR. ROSE.

FIVE TIMES THAT OVER THE LAST FEW MONTHS.

YOU'LL NEVER REALIZE IT, BUT YOU'VE DONE MORE TO *HURT* THIS ORGANIZATION THAN ANY SINGLE PERSON EVER HAS.

EVEN THE *BATMAN.*

THAT'S WHY WHAT COMES NEXT IS GOING TO BE SO MUCH *FUN.*

I'M GOING TO ENJOY CRUSHING WHAT'S LEFT OF YOUR SOUL, CALVIN. I PROMISE YOU THAT.

BEGIN THE PROCESS!

...escape...

Must escape... from what?

Owls eat rats. Owls...

THERE'S EYE MOVEMENT.

I HEAR YOU ARE A VERY TALENTED BOY WITH A VERY UNUSUAL SET OF SKILLS. WILL YOU HELP US?

MY NAME IS SEBASTIAN CLARK.

AND TOGETHER WE'RE GOING TO WIPE THE COURT OF OWLS FROM THE FACE OF THE EARTH.

YOU'RE STRONGER THAN THEM, CALVIN, YOU JUST DON'T KNOW IT.

HE'S COMING TO.

IT'S NOT ABOUT *ESCAPE*. IT WAS NEVER ABOUT ESCAPE.

THAT WAS ALWAYS YOUR *FEAR* TALKING

Casey...

YOU CAN'T BE *AFRAID* ANY-MORE

Casey!

CASEY, COME BACK!

HAH! PLEASANT DREAMS, MR. ROSE?

WHAT... WHAT HAPPENED?

WHAT DO YOU *THINK* HAPPENED? YOU *DIED*, AND WE *REVIVED* YOU.

YOU ARE STRONGER THAN YOU'VE EVER BEEN BEFORE. YOUR BODY CAN HEAL FROM ANY INJURY. YOUR ONLY WEAKNESS IS THE *COLD*.

THE COURT OF OWLS WELCOMES YOU BACK INTO THE FOLD, CALVIN ROSE.

YOU ARE OUR *TALON*, ONCE AGAIN.

WHY THE HELL WOULD I—?

WHY THE HELL WOULD YOU *OBEY?* WHY WOULD YOU *KILL* FOR US AGAIN?

Hmm... THAT'S A TOUGHIE... BUT I THINK WE MIGHT HAVE A COUPLE OF GOOD *REASONS.*

NO!

THERE'S NO WAY OUT OF THIS ONE, CALVIN.

YOU COULD CERTAINLY BREAK OUT OF YOUR RESTRAINTS, SCURRY OUT SOME SECRET AIR DUCT, BUT THE SECOND YOU DO, *THE BUTCHER* WILL SNAP CASEY'S NECK.

AND THE GIRL, SARAH, ISN'T EVEN IN THIS NEST. WE'RE *CONDITIONING* HER... ACCLIMATING HER TO OUR IDEOLOGIES.

PERHAPS SHE'LL EVEN BE A *MEMBER* SOME DAY. WOULDN'T THAT BE NICE?

BUT THIS... THIS ISN'T A *TRAP* YOU CAN *ESCAPE* YOUR WAY OUT OF.

WE HAVE *WON.*

MAKE ANY MOVE AGAINST US AND YOU'LL HAVE NOTHING LEFT TO *FIGHT* FOR.

DO YOU UNDER-STAND?

YES.

GOOD. I'M TAKING OFF YOUR RESTRAINTS

GOING ANYWHERE?

NO.

GOOD. NOW *KNEEL* DOWN BEFORE YOUR MASTERS.

HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA

YES... GRAND-MASTER.

NOW, TELL ME WHO *KILLED* YOU, CALVIN.

BANE.

WAIT... W-WHAT? HE CAN'T HAVE--

SANTA PRISCA.

SEBASTIAN CLARK IS IN SANTA PRISCA.

SANTA PRISCA.

"STRENGTH IS NOT MEASURED IN POUNDS, SEBASTIAN. IT IS MEASURED IN THE *MIND*."

"STRENGTH IS THE ART OF EXERTING YOUR *WILL* UPON THE WORLD."

"RESHAPING IT IN YOUR OWN IMAGE."

I WAS *BORN* IN THIS PRISON. I WAS ONLY A CHILD WHEN I SAW BRUTALITY YOU CAN SCARCELY DREAM OF. BUT I DID NOT BLINK. I KNEW WHAT I HAD TO BECOME.

I WAS EIGHT YEARS OLD WHEN THEY LOCKED ME AWAY IN SOLITARY, OUT OF FEAR. THEY HOPED TO *BREAK* ME.

BUT I *DO NOT BREAK.*

THEY SUBMITTED ME TO THE *VENOM* PROGRAM, EXPECTING ME TO DIE. FILLED MY VEINS WITH MORE OF THE POISON THAN ANY MAN COULD HOPE TO SURVIVE.

MY STRENGTH NEVER WAVERED.

YOUR TALON WAS TOO *WEAK* TO EVER SHAPE GOTHAM TO HIS WILL. HE WAS NOT THE SOLDIER WE NEEDED. I HAVE BUILT AN ARMY OF MEN SHAPED IN *MY* IMAGE.

GOTHAM CITY WILL TREMBLE WHEN OUR BOOTS HIT THE GROUND.

THE COURT OF OWLS... THE BATMAN... THEY WILL NOT SEE US *COMING.*

AND THEY WILL FIND NO SOLACE FROM OUR WILL. BECAUSE TOGETHER...

...WE ARE STRONG.

BENEATH THE GOTHAM PUBLIC LIBRARY...

SO LET ME GUESS, GRAND-MASTER... YOU WANT ME TO KILL THEM?

DO YOU REALLY THINK WE'D SEND YOU HUNDREDS OF MILES AWAY WITHOUT BREAKING YOU IN? NO, MY BOY. WE'RE NOT *IDIOTS.*

FIRST WE NEED TO REMIND YOU WHAT HAPPENS TO *TRAITORS* IN THIS ORGANIZATION.

YOU AREN'T THE *ONLY* TALON TO SLIP OUT OF OUR FINGERS. *THIS* ONE HAS BEEN RUNNING AROUND WITH *ALLIES* OF THE BAT. WE CAN'T ALLOW THAT.

WE'VE DEVELOPED A POWERFUL *SERUM* THAT DISSOLVES NECROTIC TISSUES. IT USES THE *ELECTRUM* IN YOUR VEINS--THE ELEMENT WHICH ALLOWED YOUR RESUR-RECTION--AS A QUICKENING AGENT.

I'VE JUST TESTED IT ON YOUR FRIEND FROM SECURITUS ISLAND, *NATHANIEL O'MALLEY...* AND HIS SCREAMS...OH, CALVIN. YOU SHOULD HAVE HEARD THEM. FROM A *TALON* NO LESS.

YOUR TARGET'S NAME IS *MARY TURNER.*

BE A DEAR AND RELIEVE HER OF HER DUTIES. *PERMANENTLY.*

AND THEN WE'LL DISCUSS HANDLING OUR LITTLE *BANE* PROBLEM...

I can barely sense the pressure of the breastplate as it snaps into place. I try to remember how heavy it used to feel.

But even the memory of the sensation is faint.

I tell myself that the fact that I can no longer feel physical pain will dull the horror of what's about to happen.

I tell myself that this is for Casey, for Sarah... that I will become the devil's tool if it means they get to breathe another day.

I tell myself that I was trained for this. That my escape was merely a fluke. A seven-year break in my eternal service to The Court.

I tell myself this will be easy.

And the trouble is...the thing I can't quite shake from my mind...

...is that I'm not entirely sure I'm lying to myself anymore.

GOTHAM CITY

Talon! It was too to hope we could into a Court of owls lab without attracting attention.

Strix is still out of it from being trapped in Mr. Freeze's ice.

I have to keep this Talon busy with me until she gets a chance to recover!

TALON vs. TALON

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He has a large knife. Why did attack me open-handed?

Why did he let me see him coming with that ridiculous leap?

If I didn't know better... I'd say he's holding back.

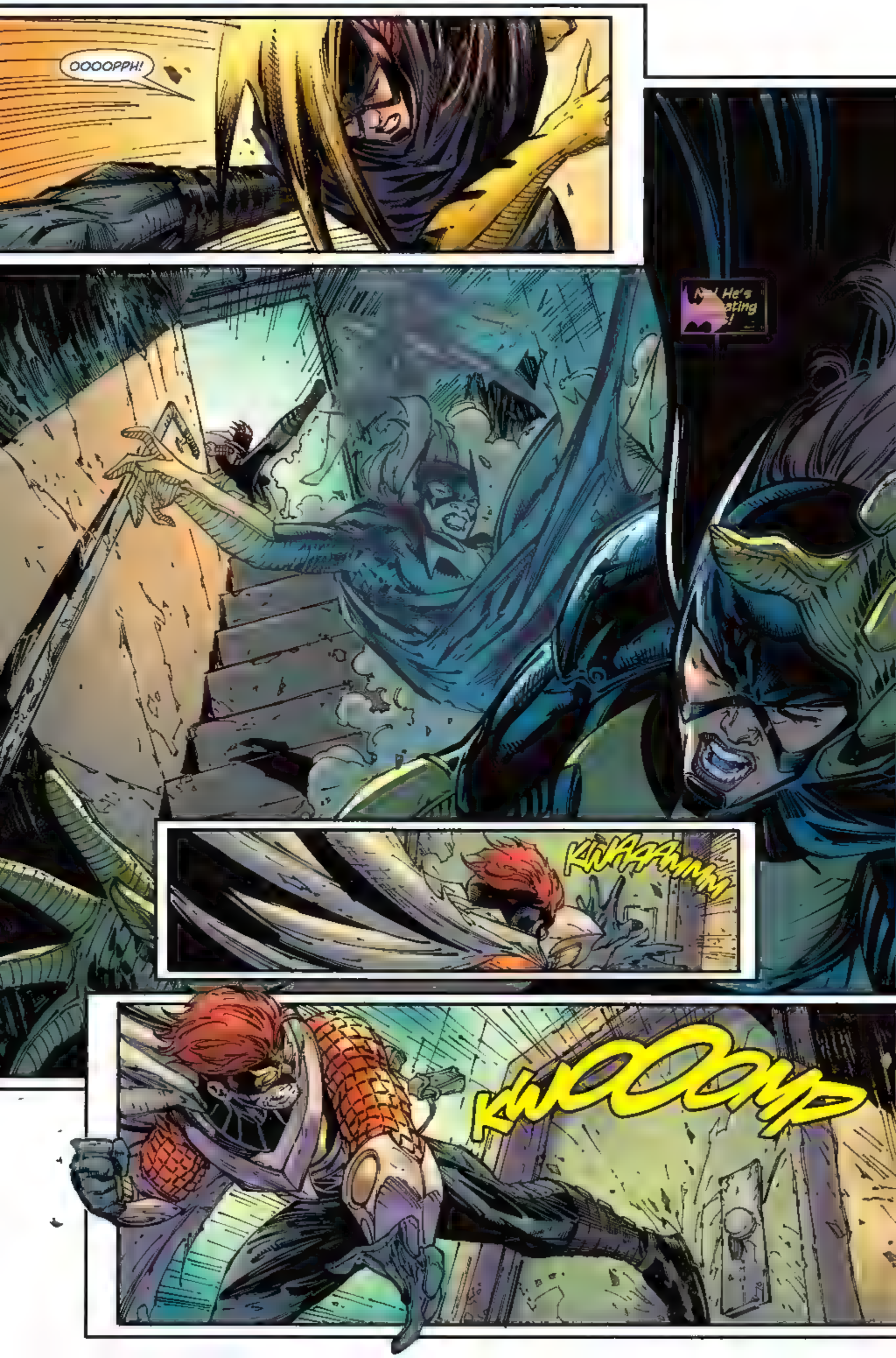
Like he's trying not to hurt me.

HHHNNNNN... HHNNNNN...

THUNK

HEY!

UNH!


OOOOPPH!
KWAAAMMM
KWOOOMP

MARY TURNER... I'M *CALVIN ROSE*, YOUR EXECUTIONER.

THE COURT OF OWLS HAS SENTENCED YOU TO *DIE*.

I'LL TRY TO MAKE IT QUICK AND MERCIFUL.

PLEASE... DON'T MAKE THIS ANY HARDER THAN IT HAS TO BE.

HRRRNNNHHH!

CONDEMNED
BUILDING
COMING SOON!
GOTHAM
REDEVELOPMENT
PROJECT
WAYNE ENTERPRISES
KNIGHTFALL

DOWN BELOW...

I MAY NOT BE GOOD ENOUGH TO HACK THE OWLS' COMPUTER, BUT I KNOW HOW TO *YANK OUT* A HARD DRIVE.

MAYBE WE CAN PULL SOME INTEL OFF THIS THAT WILL...

EARTH TO *BLACK CANARY*. ARE YOU THERE?

HOW COULD SHE DO IT, *CONDORP* I WOULD HAVE TRUSTED... I *DID* TRUST *STARLING* WITH MY LIFE.

AND ALL THIS TIME, SHE WAS *SECRETLY ALIGNED* WITH MR. FREEZE

I KNOW THE FEELING. YOU KEEP ASKING HOW THEY COULD DO IT.

YOU THINK BACK OVER EVERY MINUTE .. QUESTION EVERYTHING THEY DID, *EVERYTHING* THEY EVER SAID TRYING TO FIND THE MOMENT WHEN YOU SHOULD HAVE KNOWN.

YOU SOUND LIKE SOMEONE WHO'S BEEN THROUGH THIS *BEFORE*.

YEAH. BEEN THERE, GOT THE *SCARS* TO SHOW FOR IT. AND NOT ALL OF THE SCARS ARE METAPHORIC.

UPSTAIRS

WHUD

NO GOOD! THE DOOR WON'T *BUDGE.*

CANARY! CONDOR! DO YOU READ ME?

BATGIRL, WHAT'S WRONG?!

A TALON AMBUSHED US ON THE ROOF!

THUDD

HE SEPARATED ME FROM STRIX AND WEDGED THE DOOR. I THINK STRIX MAY HAVE BEEN HIS PRIMARY TARGET!

WE'RE ON THE WAY!

WHERE THERE'S ONE TALON, THERE MAY BE MORE. STAY ALERT!

GGGGGHHH...
DANGER!
condemned
building
DANGER!
WAYNE ENTE

The girl... Mary knew the fall wouldn't kill us. She was protecting Batgirl... the way I'm protecting Casey and Sarah.

Why did she let me revive? She could have taken my head. Even a Talon doesn't walk away from that.

And she might have been doing us both a favor.

It doesn't matter. I can't let myself think about it.

The Court of Owls owns me now.

— I have to keep moving... and do what I have to do.

KWOMPPPPAKAKK

NICE WORK, CONDOR.

I'LL DO A QUICK RECON OF THE ROOFTOP.

STRIX HAD BARELY COME AROUND. SHE COULDN'T HAVE GONE FAR.

NO *BLOOD* HERE. THE DOOR WAS SOLIDLY WEDGED. THAT DOESN'T LEAVE A LOT OF OPTIONS.

NO SIGN OF THEM ON THIS ROOF OR NEARBY ROOFS.

SHE'S *HERE*, IN THIS BUILDING. I *KNOW* IT. I HAVE TO FIND HER.

THIS BUILDING IS ENORMOUS AND THERE ARE ONLY THREE OF US--

THEN WE SPLIT UP! I'LL START FROM THE TOP AND WORK MY WAY DOWN. *LISTEN* FOR THEM.

WE'LL WORK OUR WAY UP FROM THE GROUND FLOOR.

The file they showed me on her spoke of her agility, her speed...

Something happened to her. Something that's slowed her down.

She still moves like the acrobat she once was.

But it's not enough.

HRRRNN!

I feel no pain... only a ripping sensation. I'm dead outside. Dead inside. Nothing left but dead.

GUUUNNNCH

But Casey and Sarah are still alive.

And keeping them alive is the only thing that matters right now.

HRRRNNNN!

I have to fight the urge to call [illegible] Strix. It's not like she can answer me. Besides, she's a Talon. She can hold her own.

I tell myself that. But she made a choice to come with me and leave that life behind. She needs my help to do that.

Rustling sounds...

I failed when the Joker had my mother.

My brother is beyond my help. And when I find him... I may have a terrible choice to make.

But I have a chance to help Mary and I'm not giving up on her!

WE'D COVER MORE FLOORS SEPARATELY.

YEAH, BUT THEN I COULDN'T WATCH YOUR BACK. IT DOESN'T MAKE SENSE THE COURT WOULD ONLY SEND ONE TALON. THEY OBVIOUSLY *KNOW* WE'RE HERE.

OKAY, *OUT WITH IT.* YOU WANTED NO PART OF US IN JAPAN, BUT YOU FOLLOWED US ALL THE WAY TO GOTHAM. YOU *STICK TO ME* LIKE A BURR. I WANT TO KNOW *WHY.*

DINAH...

YOU KNOW MY NAME?! *DAMN IT,* HOW MUCH DO YOU KNOW? AND *HOW* DO YOU KNOW IT?

LET'S JUST SAY YOU'RE NOT THE ONLY ONE WITH A BACKGROUND AS A SPOOK.

I KNOW WHAT PEOPLE THINK YOU DID, BUT YOU'RE NOT A *KILLER,* DINAH. WHATEVER HAPPENED WITH YOUR HUSBAND, IT WASN'T YOUR *FAULT.*

I SEE *YOUR FACE* EVERY DAY. IT'S ONLY FAIR YOU GET TO SEE *MINE.*

NO--I ..YOU SHOULDN'T. THIS ISN'T THE TIME...

WHEN ANY MOMENT COULD BE OUR LAST, ANY TIME IS THE RIGHT TIME.

THE NAME IS BEN.

YOU TOLD US A WHILE BACK THAT YOU BELONGED TO A TEAM BEFORE...BUT THAT'S NOT THE WHOLE STORY, IS IT?

WHY DID YOU REALLY INSIST ON JOINING US?

ISN'T IT OBVIOUS?

I NEED...TO BE CLOSE TO YOU.

DINAH, THERE ARE THINGS I NEED TO TELL YOU...

THOOM

DID YOU HEAR THAT?

THUMPING. NOT CLOSE BY. MAYBE A FEW FLOORS UP.

KRASH

I didn't think this would go on so long.

I have to stop holding back. Get it over with.

HRRRRNNHH!

Now, damn it, now! I have to kill her!

YOUR FACE... COVERED WITH *SCARS*. YOU'VE BEEN HURT SO BADLY.

YOU DON'T DESERVE THIS.

I--I CAN'T... GOD HELP ME... I *CAN'T*...

CASEY... SARAH... I'M SORRY. I *FAILED* YOU.

PEOPLE I *LOVE*, AND THEY HAVE THEM... *TORTURING* THEM... AND THEY'LL KILL THEM IF I DON'T BRING BACK PROOF I'VE KILLED YOU.

THEY WANT YOUR UNIFORM WITH YOUR BLOOD AND THE RESIDUE OF YOUR BODY. THIS SYRINGE HAS A CHEMICAL THAT WILL *DISSOLVE* YOUR TISSUES.

BUT I CAN'T DO IT. I CAN'T BE THE *COLD-BLOODED KILLER* THEY'RE TRYING TO FORCE ME TO BE. I RAN FOR YEARS AND NOW... THERE'S NOWHERE I CAN RUN. IT'S *OVER*.

MARY, NO! I CAN'T LET YOU--

WHAT ARE YOU DOING? YOU WANT ME TO...*FOLLOW* YOU?

She's moving with purpose. I can see the determination in her.

*She's the only chance I have. I have to trust her and pray she knows something that can **save us both.***

P
IN THIS
STREET
WAYNE

I thought it would be easy...

...with Casey and Sarah in danger, I figured I could shed my morality without a second thought.

I thought I could kill for the monsters who brought me back to life and enslaved me. Be the Talon the Court of Owls always wanted me to be.

But face-to-face with someone so very much like myself... another Talon who ran away when she couldn't face what she'd done anymore--

--a Talon who wanted to do what's right--

--I couldn't bear to inject her with the serum the Court created to end her life.

Which presented a new dilemma...

COURT OF OWLS' UNDERGROUND LAB...

...how do you lie to someone who **expects** you to lie? How do you **prove** you've killed someone you haven't killed?

First step is trying to ignore what they'd do to Casey or Sarah if the truth came out.

Second step is forgetting they could use this same serum on **me**, now, any time they want.

Third step is listening to the Talon...**Mary Turner**. Well, I guess **listen** isn't the right word. She doesn't seem **capable** of speech.

- She took us here, and her - plan was apparent immediately. Desecration of a body... a remnant of her battle with the madman known as **Mr. Freeze**.

POOR GIRL... YOU DESERVE A PROPER BURIAL. NOT THIS.

ALL RIGHT... WE'RE ALMOST READY. I'M JUST GOING TO NEED YOUR--

--um... THANK YOU.

NOW, THE SERUM THE COURT GAVE ME *SHOULD* DISSOLVE ALL NECROTIC TISSUE.

HERE'S HOPING IT WORKS ON REGULAR DEAD FOLKS JUST AS WELL AS US ZOMBIES.

THIS STAYS OUR *SECRET*, MARY. IS THAT OKAY?

CAN I TRUST YOU NOT TO TELL YOUR FRIENDS WHAT YOU DID HERE TONIGHT?

I KNOW I CAN TRUST YOU. I CAN SEE IT IN YOUR EYES.

YOU AND I, WE'RE THE *SAME.*

IT DOESN'T MATTER WHAT THOSE MONSTERS TRY TO DO TO US. WHAT THEY TRY TO CONVINCE US WE ARE.

THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IS THAT EVEN WHEN IT SEEMS IMPOSSIBLE, YOU HAVE TO DO WHAT'S IN YOUR *HEART.* YOU HAVE TO DO WHAT'S *RIGHT.*

NEVER LET ANYONE DRAG YOU THROUGH THE DARKNESS AGAIN.

Hmm... WHERE WOULD THEY--AH. HERE.

!

NO, I KNOW...THIS IS HARD TO ASK. BUT YOU HAVE TO KEEP FIGHTING. THERE HAS TO BE *ONE* OF US...

YOU NEED TO DO IT FOR *ALL* OF US. EVERY-ONE THEY'VE TRAPPED.

I NEED YOU TO STAY ON THE GOOD SIDE, BECAUSE I'M NOT SURE THAT I *CAN* ANYMORE...

...DO YOU UNDER-STAND?

THANK YOU...AND NOW...

FIVE STORIES UNDER THE GOTHAM PUBLIC LIBRARY. LATER...

"...BACK TO HELL."

YOUR SERUM WORKED, WYCLIFFE. MARY TURNER IS *DEAD.*

YOU KNOW BETTER THAN TO CALL ME BY MY *GIVEN* NAME, CALVIN ROSE.

FORGIVE ME, *GRANDMASTER.*

I IMAGINE YOU SAW THE *PAIN* IN THE EYES OF THAT POOR MUTE GIRL. THIS METHOD OF DESTRUCTION GOES FAR BEYOND YOUR NEWLY DULLED PAIN RECEPTORS.

YES, GRANDMASTER. NOW... WHAT ABOUT SEBASTIAN CLARK? WHAT ABOUT *BANE?*

AND NOW YOU KNOW WHAT OUR POWER CAN TO DO TO YOU, ANY TIME WE WISH.

CLIK

YOU'LL BE AIR-DROPPED ONTO SANTA PRISCA. WHILE THERE, YOU WILL CAPTURE *SEBASTIAN CLARK,* AND LEARN WHAT HE HAS PLANNED WITH BANE.

YOU WILL THEN *DISPATCH* CLARK, BANE, HIS LIEUTENANTS, AND *ANYONE* ON THAT HELL OF AN ISLAND WHO KNOWS OF OUR EXISTENCE.

OH, YEAH. GREAT. GO FACE-TO-FACE WITH ONE OF THE MOST DANGEROUS MILITANT LEADERS ON THE PLANET, KILL HIM AND HIS PEOPLE.

YOU KNOW THAT WILL BE NEXT TO *IMPOSSIBLE.*

THEN YOU BETTER TRY VERY, *VERY* HARD.

DO THIS AND PERHAPS WE'LL EVEN CONSIDER *RELEASING* CASEY WASHINGTON AND HER LOVELY LITTLE DAUGHTER.

FAIL AND WE'LL *KILL THEM BOTH.*

DO YOU UNDER-STAND?

YES, GRANDMASTER.

YOUR TRANSPORT LEAVES IN THIRTY MINUTES.

BEFORE I GO...

...I HAVE ONE REQUEST.

YOU WILL TELL US WHAT WE NEED TO KNOW, MS. WASHINGTON. I GUARANTEE IT. IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF TIME.

MAYBE NEXT WE'LL START PEELING BACK YOUR SKI--

NO ONE IS GETTING ANY-THING *PEELED OFF*, HARMON. BACK THE HELL OFF.

...HRMPH... VERY WELL.

THEY'VE TOLD ME I GET TWO MINUTES WITH CASEY. *ALONE.*

CALVIN?!

CALVIN, IS THAT YOU?

OH THANK GOD.. YOU'RE *ALIVE...*

MORE OR LESS. THE COURT HAS FORCED ME BACK INTO SERVICE...

I DON'T CARE *HOW.* YOU'RE ALIVE. DO YOU KNOW--

IT SOUNDS LIKE THEY'VE TAKEN SARAH TO ONE OF THEIR ALTERNATE BASES FOR *BRAINWASHING.* THEY WANT A WASHINGTON ALIVE.

AND I DON'T THINK THEY'RE COUNTING ON YOU.

AS LONG AS MY GIRL IS SAFE.

I DON'T HAVE MUCH TIME. THEY'RE SENDING ME AFTER CLARK AND BANE IN SANTA PRISCA... BUT I NEEDED TO SEE YOU BEFORE I LEFT, CASEY.

THERE'S SOMETHING I NEEDED TO DO.

WHAT?

REMEMBER EVERYTHING I TAUGHT YOU, CASEY. I'M COUNTING ON YOU.

GOODBYE.

It takes five hours by plane to fly from Gotham City to Santa Prisca, in the heart of the Caribbean.

Not that it's something any sane person would do.

When Bane took over the island, he personally saw to the bombing of both major airports.

Peña Dura, the militaristic prison in which Bane was born and raised, was declared the new capital, and outfitted into a military fortress.

With automated turrets designed to take down anything in its airspace under ten-thousand feet.

So the Court has me diving from quite a bit higher than that.

The wind should hurt. It should be stinging my face. But I feel nothing. Moments like this, it's hard not to think how much less of a man I am after my resurrection.

It's almost funny to think that just a few months ago I was diving like this into Gotham City.

I thought the Court of Owls was gone forever. I thought I might be free...

...but now...I'm trapped worse than I've ever been in my life.

No. Dammit. Stop it.

Clear your mind. Those turrets are going to notice you any second now.

Let the parachute take the brunt of the attack.

Let them look for you where they think you are...not where you actually want to be.

Sleight of hand. Pretty basic. But it works.

SCOUR THE JUNGLE! FIND THE PARACHUTER'S BODY!

YES, MALICIA!

GOD, SHE'S TERRIFYING...

YOU SEEM TO BE ABOUT THE RIGHT SIZE.

Huh?

SSSSS

OH, GOD! NO!

*

Hmm... THIS DOES NOT APPEAR TO BE WORKING...PUMPING ***VENOM*** DIRECTLY INTO THE YOUNG MAN'S HEART MAY HAVE PROVED ***FATAL.***

OH, WELL, AT LEAST WE'LL HAVE A PROPER SUPPER FOR ***YOU*** TONIGHT, WON'T WE, ***BRUTE?***

BRAH!

YOU'RE OFF YOUR POST, SOLDIER.

YOU DON'T WANT TO BE THE PROFESSOR'S NEXT *GUINEA PIG*, DO YOU?

NO, SIR.

GOOD. COME WITH US.

SIR, WE HAVE THE REPORT FROM MALICIA. THE PARACHUTE WAS A DECOY. NO BODY FOUND.

SO WHAT YOU'RE TELLING ME IS THAT THE EIGHT-MILLION-DOLLAR STATE-OF-THE-ART DEFENSE SYSTEM YOU HELPED INSTALL WAS NOT ABLE TO DISTINGUISH A *DECOY* FROM THE ACTUAL *TARGET?*

THAT THERE IS A GOOD CHANCE WE HAVE ALREADY BEEN INFILTRATED?

WHAT YOU ARE TELLING ME IS THAT YOU HAVE *FAILED.*

I...I TAKE FULL RESPONSIBILITY.

YES. YOU *DO.*

IS THAT REALLY NECESSARY?

THIS IS MY ISLAND, SEBASTIAN. YOU ARE MERELY HERE IN AN ADVISORY CAPACITY. DO NOT *TELL* ME WHAT IS NECESSARY.

I WOULDN'T DARE...I WAS MERELY COMMENTING.

GUARDS...TAKE MR. CLARK BACK TO HIS QUARTERS WHILE WE FIND OUR INTRUDER.

YES, SIR!

PTEW

HELLO, SEBASTIAN.

IT'S BEEN A WHILE.

CALVIN?!

MEANWHILE, IN GOTHAM...

C'MON YOU BASTARD. OPEN...

THERE. NOW FOR THE *HARD* PART.

CLACK

UNGH...

COURT'S NOT THE ONLY ONE IN THE *FAKE TOOTH* BUSINESS.

OKAY, LITTLE GUY... I BUILT YOU TO SEND A COVERT MORSE SIGNAL BY HOPPING ONTO ANY COMM NETWORK I COULD IMAGINE...

...LET'S HOPE MY IMAGINATION WAS A BIT *BIGGER* THAN THE COURT'S.

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE WORLD.

ANYA! DO YOU FEEL IT?!

I NEVER ONCE THOUGHT THE DAMN THING WOULD *WORK*... THE STRANGEST SENSATION...LITTLE *CLICKS* RATTLING INSIDE MY HEAD...

IT'S HER, ISN'T IT?! IT'S *CASEY!*

SHUT UP, *JOEY.* I'M TRYING TO MAKE OUT WHAT SHE'S SAYING--

--THIS IS VERY BAD.

YOU JUST CAME BACK FROM YOUR MYSTERIOUS LITTLE *TRIP* TO GOTHAM... MAYBE YOU SHOULD HAVE *STAYED?*

YOU HAVE NO IDEA HOW TO LISTEN TO MORSE CODE, DO YOU?

GET THE OTHERS. IT'S TIME WE GOT BACK TO WORK.

I WOULD ASK HOW IT'S POSSIBLE THAT YOU'RE *ALIVE*, BUT I HELPED DEVELOP THE PROCESS.

EVEN SO, I'M SURPRISED YOU'RE HERE. THEY MUST HAVE YOUR GIRLS. THREATENING THEIR LIVES SO THAT YOU WILL DO THEIR BIDDING.

YOU'RE NO *KILLER*, CALVIN. WE BOTH KNOW THAT.

IN MOST CASES, YOU'D BE RIGHT...BUT FACE TO FACE WITH THE MAN WHO TRICKED A YOUNG BOY INTO A HORRIBLE LIFE OF WANTON MURDER...

A MAN WHO FEIGNED FRIENDSHIP AND ALLIANCE TO FURTHER HIS OWN PRIVATE *VENDETTAS*...

...THE MAN MOST DIRECTLY RESPONSIBLE FOR NEARLY *EVERY* HORRIBLE MOMENT IN A VERY HORRIBLE LIFE...

I THINK I CAN MAKE AN *EXCEPTION* FOR THAT MAN.

THIS IS GOING TO BE *EASY*.

I WOULDN'T COUNT ON IT, MY BOY.

Huh?

DC COMICS™ PRESENTS: TALON

UNEASY

I'D LIKE YOU TO MEET ONE OF MY NEW *ASSOCIATES* HERE ON SANTA PRISCA.

WOLF-SPIDER, WOULD YOU DO ME THE HONOR OF RIPPING MR. ROSE APART?

IT WOULD BE MY *PLEASURE.*

JAMES TYNION IV WRITER GRAHAM NOLAN LAYOUTS MIGUEL SEPULVEDA FINISHES
RAIN BEREDO COLORS TAYLOR ESPOSITO LETTERS SEPULVEDA AND BEREDO COVER
KATIE KUBERT EDITOR MIKE MARTS GROUP EDITOR

ARE YOU LISTENING, *SARAH?*

Y-YES...

GOOD. NOW REPEAT AFTER ME...

...*O* IS FOR *OWL.*

DEEP UNDER THE GOTHAM PUBLIC LIBRARY...

IT'S GOING WELL, DON'T YOU THINK, MISS WASHINGTON?

YOUR DAUGHTER WILL MAKE A FINE ADDITION TO THE COURT ONE DAY. WHEN SHE'S BEEN FULLY REPROGRAMMED. SHE'S ALREADY BEGUN TO TELL US ALL SORTS OF THINGS...

...FOR INSTANCE-- AND PARDON ME, I'D LIKE TO GET THE TERMINOLOGY JUST RIGHT-- · THERE IS A "DNA-ENCODED BACKUP" OF YOUR FATHER'S PATENTS IN NEW YORK. YOU TOLD HER ABOUT IT, IN CASE ANYTHING SHOULD HAPPEN TO YOU.

WELL I'M TERRIBLY SORRY, MISS WASHINGTON, BUT SOMETHING IS DEFINITELY GOING TO HAPPEN TO YOU. WE DON'T NEED YOU ANYMORE.

SO, KILL ME THEN, *BUTCHER!* THAT'S CLEARLY WHAT YOU WANT.

OH, YES...

...BUT IF YOUR BOYFRIEND SURVIVES THIS LITTLE SUICIDE MISSION IN SANTA PRISCA, I WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO SLIT YOUR THROAT RIGHT IN FRONT OF HIM.

THE COURT SAID...

THEY SAY ALL SORTS OF THINGS, CASEY. DON'T YOU SEE THAT NOW? THIS IS WHERE YOUR STORY ENDS.

RIGHT HERE IN THIS ROOM.

THE SECOND WE GET WORD OF CALVIN'S FINAL DEMISE...OH, MY DEAR...

...WHAT FUN WE'LL HAVE.

MEANWHILE, IN SANTA PRISCA...

ALL SORTS OF FUN

WRITTEN BY JAMES TYNION IV
ART BY MIGUEL SEPULVEDA AND SZYMON KUDRANSKI
COLORS BY JEROMY COX . LETTERS BY DEZI SIENTY
COVER BY MIGUEL SEPULVEDA AND RAIN BEREDO
EDITOR KATIE KUBERT
GROUP EDITOR MIKE MARTS

YOU CAN'T GET AWAY FROM THE *WOLF SPIDER*, TALON. I AM DIFFERENT FROM THE OTHER *MONSTROSITIES* ON THIS ISLAND...

I WAS A *VOLUNTEER*, YOU SEE. I HAD AN IDEA, ONCE I HEARD THEY HAD STARTED THE VENOM TESTING AGAIN.

I TOLD THE PROFESSOR TO *RIP* MY MUSCLES APART. TO *SHATTER* AND RESET MY BONES BEFORE APPLYING HIS NEW BREED OF *VENOM*.

I DON'T CARE!

FXIT

I WAS A RUNNER ONCE... I DIDN'T WANT TO BE A RIDICULOUS BODY-BUILDER. I WANTED TO *RUN* AGAIN.

MY BODY HAS BEEN PERFECTLY AUGMENTED TO MAKE ME FASTER THAN ANY MAN YOU'VE EVER FACED.

I SAID, I *DON'T CARE!*

YOU'RE A RUDE LITTLE THING, *TALON*.

CRUNCH

I AM SIMPLY TRYING TO IMPART SOME SANTA PRISCAN HOSPITALITY.

I WANTED TO EXPLAIN WHY YOU CAN'T *BEAT* ME, CALVIN ROSE.

I WANTED YOU TO KNOW EXACTLY HOW YOU ARE ABOUT TO *DIE.*

KRRUCH

ON THE OTHER SIDE OF SANTA PRISCA...

YOU DO *NOT* TELL ME WHEN TO BOARD MY OWN SHIPS. DO YOU *UNDERSTAND?*

PUH-PLEASE.. MASTER..

GCCUKKK

PATHETIC.

BANE! HE'S HERE--

--GET THE HELL OUT OF MY WAY, YOU IDIOTS--

IT'S *CALVIN ROSE.* THE COURT SENT MY OWN TALON BACK TO *KILL* ME.

TO KILL *ALL* OF US. YOU HAVE TO STOP THE BOARDING PROCESS AND *DEAL* WITH THIS.

NO.

YOUR PLAN ALERTED THE COURT TO OUR MACHINATIONS, JUST AS I *SUSPECTED* IT WOULD, SEBASTIAN.

I WILL *NOT* SIT BY AND ALLOW THEM THE TIME TO PREPARE AGAINST US.

THIS IS WHAT YOUR MONEY BOUGHT US. FOR THAT I AM GRATEFUL.

BUT I HAVE WAITED FAR TOO LONG TO *CRUSH* GOTHAM CITY BENEATH MY HEEL.

THIS ARMY IS THE KEY TO THAT *DOMINATION.* I WILL NOT BE SUBVERTED BY AN INSIGNIFICANT SPECK SUCH AS YOUR LITTLE *TALON.*

GENTLEMEN! BOARD THE SHIPS!

WE LEAVE FOR GOTHAM TONIGHT!

HOO-RAH!

NOW...LET'S TAKE CARE OF YOUR PEST, SEBASTIAN...WE HAVE A SCHEDULE TO MAINTAIN.

MALICIA... THIS IS WOLF-SPIDER. I HAVE THE INTRUDER

HE HAS BEEN...DEALT WITH

YEAH. NOT SO MUCH.

HAVING A HEALING FACTOR REALLY IS A GAME-CHANGER, ISN'T IT?

I BARELY FELT *ANY* OF THAT.

COME ON, WOLFY, LET'S FINISH THIS.

THE GOTHAM PUBLIC LIBRARY.

MISS WASHINGTON ...ARE YOU READY TO PLAY--

--NO. DAMMIT, NO.

THIS IS HARMON. THE WASHINGTON GIRL HAS ESCAPED...

...ARE YOU CRAZY? I CAN'T GO UP THERE WITHOUT GETTING NOTICED, YOU IDIOTS, I'M NOT THE ONLY TALON IN THIS BUILDING! GET HER!

SHUNK

-UNGH- DON'T MIND ME, KIDS.

SORRY, PAL, BUT YOUR BOSS ALREADY TOOK THE WHOLE "KILLING ME" OPTION OFF THE TABLE.

THAT DOESN'T MEAN WE STILL CAN'T *BEAT* YOU.

AW, HELL...

I WOULD LIKE YOU TO MEET ***BANE'S ARMY,*** TALON. SOON WE'LL DEPART FOR GOTHAM AND TEAR EACH AND EVERY OWL ASUNDER.

I IMAGINE THEY'D LIKE TO GET A HEAD START WITH ***YOU.***

YOU WANT TO DESTROY THE COURT? GOOD.

SERIOUSLY, GUYS. I WISH YOU THE BEST OF LUCK. ALTHOUGH, I HOPE YOU'VE GOT A LITTLE MORE UP YOUR SLEEVES THAN A MUSCLED-UP BOY BAND.

WE HAVE AN ENTIRE ARMY, TALON. THE SURVIVORS OF THIS PRISON, ENHANCED BY ***BANE'S*** DREAM AND THE ***PROFESSOR'S*** MACHINATIONS.

WE WILL STORM THE BEACHES OF GOTHAM CITY.

AND DELIVER IT TO ITS RIGHTFUL KING.

BANE.

A PRETTY STORY TO BE SURE.

BUT IT IS A ***FAIRY TALE,*** YES?

ICE

ANYA?! WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?

WHAT DOES IT *LOOK* LIKE WE'RE DOING, CALVIN? WE ARE SAVING ALL OF YOUR BUTT.

SYNTAX, ANYA.

FFIGGGGL

JOEYP!

CASEY'S RAGTAG EX-CRIMINAL PALS AT YOUR SERVICE.

Q-QUICK

Q-QUICK

GGHIFKLL

HGGLLICK

AND EDGAR... THE GANG'S ALL HERE.

YESSSSSS...

I'M GLAD TO SEE--

THIS ISN'T OVER, TALON!

YEAH, WANNA BET?

SO, WHAT? THEY GAVE BANE A SPINOFF OR SOMETHING?

I'M JUST SAYING, THIS GUY LOOKS SUPER *WEIRD.*

THAT PUNCH BROKE MY HAND.

THAT SUCKS.

IT'LL HEAL.

HOW THE HELL DID YOU GET IN HERE, ANYWAY?

CASEY PLANNED FOR US TO BREAK A PRISONER OUT OF PENA DURA SIX MONTHS AGO. BUT HE WAS *EXECUTED* BEFORE WE MADE IT TO SANTA PRISCA.

CASEY'S PLANS WERE VERY DETAILED. AND THEY DIDN'T INVOLVE BEING STUPID ENOUGH TO TRY AN *AIR DROP.*

HEY!

JUST GOTTA ACCEPT IT, MAN. CASEY'S *WAY* SMARTER THAN YOU.

"SHE'S WAY SMARTER THAN *ANY* OF US."

MISS WASHINGTON...

...YOU WILL COME WITH US, NOW, AND THERE WON'T BE ANY TROUBLE.

YOU KNOW AS WELL AS I DO, YOU CAN'T MAKE A SCENE ON TOP OF THE LARGEST COURT BASE IN THE CITY.

YOU CAN'T AFFORD THAT KIND OF ATTENTION, *TALONS.*

DO YOU REALLY WANT TO **BET** ON THAT?

YEAH

I KINDA *DO.*

BLAM BLAM BLAM

ARE YOU *CRAZY?!* YOU ARE *SO* UNDER ARREST, LADY.

WE CAN TAKE CARE OF THIS, OFFICER...

YOU'RE JOKING, RIGHT? YOU'RE A COUPLE OF RENT-A-COPS-- I'M *G.C.P.D* --GET THE HELL OUT OF MY WAY.

YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO REMAIN SILENT, LADY, ANYTHING YOU SAY OR DO MAY BE USED AGAINST YOU IN A COURT OF LAW...

GIVE MY REGARDS TO *HARMON*, BOYS.

I AM GETTING ANOTHER MESSAGE.

OH, DON'T TELL ME CASEY ACTUALLY WENT *THROUGH* WITH THAT CRAZY TOOTH IDEA...

I STILL HAVE THE DENTAL SURGERY NIGHTMARES TO PROVE IT.

YESSS...

SHE'S OUT OF THE BASE. SHE'S NOT ENTIRELY FREE, BUT SHE'S FREE FROM *THEM*. THE COURT STILL HAS HER DAUGHTER, BUT THEY WON'T KILL THE GIRL. *YET*.

SHE SAYS SHE HAS AN IDEA TO GET SARAH BACK.

BUT CASEY'S *ALIVE*...

THANK *GOD*.

I WOULDN'T THANK ANYONE JUST *YET*, MR. ROSE...

...I'D SAY YOUR TROUBLES ARE JUST *BEGINNING.*

GOTHAM CITY POLICE DEPARTMENT.

SHE'S *DEAD!*

WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT, OFFICER?

AS IN I WAS JUST HOLDING A COPY OF HER *DEATH CERTIFICATE* IN MY DAMN HAND!

I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO TELL YOU, COMMISSIONER GORDON. THE WOMAN IN THAT ROOM CAN'T BE *CASEY WASHINGTON.*

THE HEIRESS THAT WENT MISSING SEVEN YEARS BACK?

YEAH, THAT'S THE ONE.

HAD TO ARREST THIS CHICK FOR FIRING OFF A *GUN* IN THE *GOTHAM PUBLIC LIBRARY.*

LOOKED LIKE SOMEONE ROUGHED HER UP. SHE'S RIGHT IN HERE...

IS THIS SOME KIND OF *JOKE*, OFFICER WHATELY?

WHA--I *SWEAR*, SHE WAS HERE A MINUTE AGO.

ROOF

HUFF: I'M COMING FOR YOU BABY GIRL.

MEANWHILE,
ON THE ISLAND OF SANTA PRISCA...

YOU DIDN'T REALLY THINK YOU COULD EVADE MY PRESENCE *FOREVER*, TALON?!

LOOK AT THEIR FACES, *BANE!* THEY KNOW THEY'RE ALREADY *DEAD.*

BRRAAAAAAH!

TRUE STRENGTH

JAMES TYNION-WRITER
SZYMON KUBRANSKI-ARTIST
JEROMY COX-COLOR DEZI SIENTY-LETTERS
MIGUEL SEPULVEDA AND RAIN BERENO-COVER
CATIE KUBERT-EDITOR MIKE MARTS-GROUP EDITOR

I'M GUESSING YOU GUYS CAME WITH AN EXIT PLAN THAT DOESN'T INVOLVE A VENOM MONSTER'S DIGESTIVE TRACT, ANYA.

THERE ARE TWO *HYPERSONIC JETS* ON THE ROOF OF THE EAST TOWER OF PEÑA DURA PRISON CALVIN. WE PLAN TO *BORROW* ONE

IS YOUR PRESENCE HERE SUPPOSED TO *IMPRESS* ME? THAT YOU AND YOUR FRIENDS MADE IT ONTO MY ISLAND AND STORMED THE WALLS OF MY PRISON?

YOUR FORMER PARTNER, *SEBASTIAN CLARK*, HAS TOLD ME EVERYTHING ABOUT YOU, *TALON.* I CAN SEE YOUR METTLE CLEAR AS DAY.

ALL YOU'VE EVER KNOWN HOW TO DO IS *RUN.* YOU DO NOT FIGHT. YOU DO NOT STAND UP FOR YOURSELF.

YOU ARE A WEAK, SELFISH MAN, CONCERNED ONLY WITH *SELF-PRESERVATION.*

AND WHAT WILL YOU DO NOW, CALVIN ROSE? RUN *AGAIN?*

YEAH. THAT'S PRETTY MUCH THE IDEA.

EVERYBODY SCRAMBLE!

MALICIA, GET THE OTHERS. CALVIN ROSE BELONGS TO *ME.*

GOTHAM CITY.
LATER...

C'MON, HERO ~HUFF~ DON'T LEAVE ME UP HERE ALONE I'VE GOT AN 8 YEAR OLD GIRL BEING *BRAINWASHED* BY BIRD-MASK-WEAR NG *LUNATICS.* SHE NEEDS SAVING TONIGHT.

THUD

~BATMAN?

NO. NOT BATMAN..

THE BUTCHER?!

OH, MY DEAR CASEY, WHY DID YOU RUSH OUT?

I HAD SUCH A WONDERFUL NIGHT PLANNED FOR US BACK AT THE COURT OF OWLS' BASE.

I SUPPOSE THIS WILL HAVE TO DO.

IN THE BOWELS OF PEÑA DURA PRISON...

YES, THAT'S RIGHT, ANYA. RUN RIGHT INTO MY BLADE.

УРОД! YOU DO NOT CALL ME *ANYA*. YOU HAVE NOT EARNED THE *RIGHT* TO USE MY PROPER NAME, *MALICIA!*

WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE, AND WHY WOULD YOU THINK I *CARE?*

THERE IS MUCH FOR YOU TO CARE ABOUT. MY UNCLE, HE WAS AN OFFICER IN THE *KGB*. CORRUPT. CRUEL.

HE *SOLD* ME AT AN AUCTION IN THE UNDERGROUND CITY OF *ETH ALTH'EBAN* IN EXCHANGE FOR THE ASSASSINATION OF A POLITICAL RIVAL. I WAS TWELVE YEARS OLD.

A MAN IN A *GREEN CLOAK* TOLD ME HE WOULD BE MY UNCLE NOW, AND THAT HE WOULD TRAIN ME PERSONALLY IN THE ART OF SWORDPLAY.

AN ART HE HAD BEEN PERFECTING FOR OVER *700 YEARS.*

YOU MIGHT BE DANGEROUS, *MALICIA*, I DO NOT DOUBT IT.

BUT YOU ARE FACING THE FORMER SPARRING PARTNER OF *RA'S AL GHUL!*

ON THE OTHER SIDE OF PENA DURA PRISON...

DAMMIT, ED, YOU TOOK US TO A DEAD END...

HE CERTAINLY DID.

WHAT THE HELL--?

IT'S FUNNY HOW HISTORY REPEATS ITSELF IN THIS PRISON. DID YOU KNOW FIVE GREEN BERETS SLIPPED IN HERE THE DAY BANE TOOK POWER? THEIR PLANS WERE SIMPLE--

--***ASSASSINATION.*** THEY WOKE THE NEXT MORNING IN THIS VERY LABORATORY. THEY WERE ***PRESENTS***, YOU SEE. BANE'S SPECIAL GIFT TO ME... ***THE PROFESSOR.***

SO RUGGED AND STRONG, THOSE AMERICAN BOYS. BUT I KNEW I COULD MAKE THEM ***BETTER.***

I KNEW THEY COULD HANDLE VENOM IN HIGHER DOSES THAN ANYONE HAD EVER SURVIVED BEFORE. PERHAPS MORE THAN BANE ***HIMSELF.***

ONLY ***ONE*** SURVIVED... HIS ***BRAIN***, HOWEVER... IT'S A SAD STORY. IT TAKES GOADING TO GET HIM AROUND THESE DAYS.

JOEY, THISSS DOESN'T LOOK GOOD...

THERE'S ONE ***SONG*** HE LIKES QUITE A BIT, THOUGH, MY ***BRUTE***. IT TIES HIM TO SOMETHING LOST DEEP WITHIN HIS RUDIMENTARY SUBCONSCIOUS.

HERE, LET ME ***SING*** IT FOR YOU.

IT'SSS COMING...

O BEAUTIFUL, FOR SPACIOUS SKIES...

...FOR AMBER WAVES OF GRAIN...

THUMP THUMP THUMP

EDGAR, WE NEED TO MOVE. ***NOW.***

FER PURBLE MUNTN MAGTIES!

KRSSH

ANY SECOND NOW--

THE DUNGEONS BELOW PEÑA DURA...

IS THIS SUPPOSED TO BE SOME KIND OF *INTIMIDATION* PLAY, TALON?

SMASH

TAKING ME DOWN HERE...DOWN TO THE OLD SOLITARY *DUNGEON*... THE PLACE I SPENT MY CHILDHOOD.

BEFORE THE OWLS FOUND YOU, YOU *ALSO* SPENT YOUR CHILDHOOD IN A CAGE.

SEBASTIAN CLARK HAS TOLD ME *EVERYTHING*, CALVIN. PERHAPS YOU THINK THIS PLACE HAS SOME *POWER* OVER ME.

YOU COULDN'T BEAR IT, COULD YOU?

IF SOMEONE TOOK YOU TO THE BACK LOT IN KENTUCKY WHERE THEY RAISED YOU LIKE A *DOG*, YOU WOULD CRUMBLE, WOULDN'T YOU?

BUT LET ME TELL YOU SOMETHING, CALVIN ROSE. I *RELISH* THIS PLACE.

I SPENT *YEARS* ALONE DOWN HERE WITH NO LOVE, NO COMFORT, NO HUMAN CONTACT OF ANY KIND...

...IN MY CAGE, I FOUND *STRENGTH*. IN YOUR CAGE, YOU FOUND *NOTHING*. YOU BROKE FREE AND RAN LIKE THE PITIFUL CHILD YOU WERE.

YOU *DISGUST* ME.

YOUR SOUL IS RIDDLED WITH *COWARDICE*. YOU RUN AND YOU RUN AND YOU RUN, AND YOU TRAP YOURSELF ALL OVER AGAIN.

YOU DIED AT MY HANDS ONCE ALREADY, CALVIN. YOU SHOULD HAVE *STAYED DEAD*.

GOTHAM CITY.

I WISH I COULD FEEL THIS... NOT THE PAIN, OF COURSE...BUT THE SIMPLE SENSATION OF GRINDING YOUR UPPER HUMERUS INTO DUST.

BUT YOU'RE NOT SCREAMING. HOW ARE YOU NOT SCREAMING?

BEEN THINKING TOO HARD ABOUT WHEN TO PULL *THIS* SUCKER OUT.

GRRBBED IT DOWNSTAIRS, JUST IN CASE.

ZZZZZT

WHAM

UGH...

I PROMISE YOU, GIRL. I WILL MAKE YOU SCREAM BEFORE YOU DIE!

NO. YOU WONT.

HMM? YOU THINK THIS IS ENOUGH TO STOP ME?

THUNK

NO--

--NOT REALLY.

JUST NEEDED A MOMENT TO FIND SOMETHING HARD ENOUGH TO *HIT* YOU WITH.

BATMAN?!

I'VE BEEN EAGER TO TAKE YOU ON FACE TO FACE...

...I GUESS MY DEAR MS. WASHINGTON WILL HAVE TO WAIT TO DIE.

I'M GOING TO KEEP HER WAITING FOR A GOOD LONG TIME.

HEH. I CAN'T EVEN FEEL THIS. WHAT DID YOU HOPE TO GAIN?

TRYING TO PULL ME CLOSER? TRYING TO GIVE ME A LITTLE KISS?

NOT EXACTLY.

I DID THIS WITH A TRUCK ONCE. THE WEIGHT SHOULD BE ROUGHLY THE SAME.

NO... NO!

-KOFF-

COURT OF OWLS... HAS MY SARAH. MY BABY GIRL...

YOU NEED A DOCTOR, MS. WASHINGTON--

NO....YOU HAVE TO *LISTEN*, BATMAN. I NEED YOU TO LISTEN TO ME RIGHT NOW.

THEY'RE... *HURTING* HER. YOU HAVE TO *SAVE* HER.

CALVIN CAN FIND .. CALVIN CAN *FIND* HER ..

CALVIN ROSE? THE *TALON?*

YOU AND CALVIN. YOU CAN *SAVE* HER. I KNOW YOU CAN.

KEEP YOUR EYES OPEN...WE'RE GOING TO GET YOU HELP...

MY G R... BATMAN. SAVE MY G R...

WHO THE HELL TURNED THAT-- *BATMAN?*

COMMISSIONER, GET AN AMBULANCE. *NOW*. SHE'S LOSING TOO MUCH BLOOD ..

...GET HER, AND GO! THERE'S NOT MUCH TIME. IT'S NOT SAFE UP HERE...THAT *MASSIVE TALON,* HE'S--

--GONE.

SANTA PRISCA.

BRAHHHH!

JOEY-- FINISSSH *PLAYING* AND GET OUT OF MY WAY!

THISSS *VENOM*... WILL WEAKEN THE SUPPORT BEAM.

TAKING OUT *BRUTE* HERE? DON'T THINK THAT QUITE QUALIFIES AS *PLAY*, EDGAR.

I JUST NEED ONE SSSHOT AT THE BEAM...

BLAM

MREH?

KRRRRK

FWOOMF

SINCE WHEN ARE YOU A *CHEMIST?*

MADE BOMBS FROM LESSSS.

'COURSE YOU HAVE, BUDDY...WE GOT TO GET OUT OF HERE, THAT MONSTER WILL BE BACK UP IN SECONDS... WHERE'S ANYA--

--OH. NEVER MIND.

I MUST ADMIT, I WAS GETTING BORED. DID YOU TWO HAVE FUN DISPATCHING BANE'S COMRADES?

I FOUND THE EXPERIENCE RATHER *МОНОТОННЫЙ*, I MUST ADMIT. MALICIA WAS NO MATCH FOR *ANYA VOLKOVA* OF THE *LEAGUE OF ASSASSINS.*

ANYWAY...COME NOW, BOYS. WE HAVE A *PLANE* TO STEAL. WHERE IS *CALVIN?*

IN THE DUNGEONS...

ALL RIGHT. I'VE HAD *ENOUGH* OF YOUR CRAPPY ARMCHAIR PSYCHOLOGY, BANE!

I DON'T C--

NO, SERIOUSLY. SHUT THE HELL UP.

THWACK

YEAH. I GOT OUT OF MY CAGE. YEAH, I WAS AFRAID. I WAS EIGHT FREAKING YEARS OLD, AND I WAS ABOUT TO *DIE*...BUT GUESS WHAT? I *DIDN'T.*

YOU THINK ESCAPE IS A FORM OF *WEAK-NESS?* YOU'RE KIDDING YOURSELF. IT'S HOW I'VE STAYED STRONG. IT'S WHY I'VE ALREADY *WON* HERE, TONIGHT.

WHAT?

YOU REALLY THINK I TOOK YOU DOWN HERE TO HURT YOUR *FEELINGS* WITH A METAPHORICAL TRIP THROUGH YOUR PAST?

I CAME DOWN HERE BECAUSE I SPENT *HOURS* STUDYING THE PIPE LAYOUTS OF THIS PRISON.

HSSS

YOU THINK A SPRAY OF *VENOM* CAN STOP ME?!

IT'S NOT VENOM. JUST GOOD OLD-FASHIONED *ACID*. I'M SURE IT'LL BARELY SLOW YOU DOWN, BUT THAT DOESN'T MATTER. I'VE ALREADY WON HERE TONIGHT.

YOU DON'T GET TO *WIN*, TALON.

NO. I TOTALLY DO.

I WIN BY GRAPPLING RIGHT UP THIS PIPE YOU CAN'T FIT THROUGH, UP TO THE ROOF, WHERE MY FRIENDS AND I ARE GOING TO STEAL ONE OF YOUR FANCY PLANES.

THEN I'M GOING TO GOTHAM CITY, WHERE WE'RE GOING TO LET EVERYBODY KNOW ABOUT THIS SECRET *INVASION* OF YOURS BEFORE IT CAN EVEN BEGIN.

I MIGHT NOT BE ABLE TO BEAT YOU IN A WRESTLING MATCH, BUT I DON'T HAVE TO PLAY THIS GAME YOUR WAY. IN FACT, I *REFUSE* TO.

I WIN BY RUNNING. THAT'S HOW I'M STRONG.

NO!

CALVIN! WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN?!
HEH. GUESS THOSE SCHEMATICS WERE ACCURATE. ANYA FOUND THE PLANE ALL RIGHT.
QUICK, QUICK, QUICK. THE TURRETS WILL ONLY STAY DISENGAGED FOR ANOTHER THIRTY SECONDS.
IS THAT LONG ENOUGH?
YOU EVER SEE ONE OF THESE BABIES BEFORE? WE'LL BE BACK IN AMERICAN AIRSPACE IN TEN MINUTES. IN GOTHAM WITHIN THE HOUR.
GOOD.
WOOOOOSH

PUNCH IN CASEY'S NUMBERS.

TAKE A MOMENT, CALVIN. CATCH YOUR BREATH, WE HAVE TIME.

NO. SHE'S OUT OF THE BASE, RIGHT? HER RADIO SIGNAL SHOULD BE ON NOW.

OKAY... YOU SHOULD BE THROUGH.

CASEY, I DON'T KNOW IF YOU CAN HEAR THIS, BUT IT'S *ME*... I'M FREE. WELL, *SAFE*, ANYWAY.

I'M COMING FOR YOU NOW, AND THEN WE'LL GET SARAH, AND MAYBE THIS WILL ALL FINALLY BE *OVER*.

WE JUST NEED TO ALERT SOMEBODY... BANE HAS A WHOLE *ARMY*, THEY'RE GETTING READY TO STORM THE CITY--

SAY THAT AGAIN.

WAIT... WHO IS *THIS*?

YOU JUST SAID *BANE* IS COMING TO GOTHAM. HOW DO YOU KNOW THAT? WHERE ARE YOU, CALVIN?

B-BATMAN?

DON'T KNOW HOW YOU GOT THIS LINE, BUT IF I DON'T HEAR CASEY'S VOICE IN THE NEXT TEN SECONDS--

I CAN'T DO THAT.

YOU'RE SERIOUSLY GOING TO GIVE ME ANOTHER SPEECH ABOUT HOW I'M A THREAT TO THE CITY?! PUT HER ON THE DAMN LINE!

...

SHE'S BEEN HURT, CALVIN... VERY BADLY.

I... DON'T THINK SHE'S GOING TO SURVIVE.

BACK ON THE SANTA PRISCA DOCKS...LATER.

WE CAN STILL SEND THE SHIPS, BANE...GET THEM *MOVING*... WE WON'T BE TOO FAR BEHIND CALVIN AND HIS CRONIES, BARELY A DAY--

WHAT *PURPOSE* WOULD THAT SERVE? YOUR LOOSE ENDS JUST COST ME MY WAR, SEBASTIAN.

NOT QUITE...

...YOUR LIEUTENANTS MAY HAVE BEEN DISPATCHED, AND YOUR PLANS MAY SOON BECOME COMMON KNOWLEDGE AMONG YOUR ENEMIES.

BUT THE GAME IS NOT LOST QUITE SO *EASILY*. OUR SOCIETY HAS BEEN PLANNING SOMETHING SPECIAL, AND WE'D LIKE YOU TO *JOIN US*.

WHO THE HELL--?

THIS GUY CAN'T JUST SWOOP IN HERE AND TAKE MY ARMY AWAY FROM ME...

YOUR ARMY?

I AM THE MAN WHO CAN OFFER A BETTER *SOLUTION*, SEBASTIAN CLARK.

I CAN OFFER YOU *GOTHAM CITY*.

I *PAID* FOR YOUR DAMN REVOLUTION, BANE! DON'T YOU FORGET THAT! I WILL NOT LET SOME STRANGE MAN BARGE IN HERE AND RIP MY INVESTMENTS *AWAY* FROM ME.

I WANT MY REVENGE. I WANT THE COURT TO *PAY*--THAT'S WHY WE CREATED THIS PARTNERSHIP.

THIS "PARTNERSHIP" OF OURS HAS OUTLIVED ITS USEFULNESS.

WHAM

NOW... TELL ME ABOUT THIS *SOCIETY.*

GLADLY.

HALY'S CIRCUS. 1852...

HORROR THRIVES IN THE DARK.

IT KNOWS THAT'S WHERE IT BELONGS. IT KNOWS THAT'S WHERE FEAR IS BORN AND WHERE IT BLOOMS INTO TERROR.

IT KNOWS THESE THINGS, DEEP DOWN. IT KNOWS.

BUT TRUE MONSTERS, TRUE HORRORS...THE DARK ISN'T ENOUGH FOR THEM.

THEY DEMAND RECOGNITION.

THEY DEMAND THE LIGHT.

THE CARIBBEAN OCEAN. NOW...

ERROR

ERROR

ERROR

CONFIRMING COORDINATES. SANTA PRISCA. CONFIRMED.

NO TRACE OF ISLAND. NO TRACE OF WARSHIPS.

ERROR. NO TRACE.

NO TRACE.

TARGET

BLACKLIGHT

JAMES TYNION IV WRITER
EMANUEL SIMEONI ARTIST
JEROMY COX COLORIST
DEZI SIENTY LETTERER
KEN HUNT AND BRETT SMITH COVER
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NO TRACE

BENEATH THE GOTHAM PUBLIC LIBRARY...

THERE'S NO TRACE OF ANY ACTIVITY IN THIS BASE, CALVIN.

THEY WERE *HERE*. I WAS HERE WITH THEM. THIS WAS THE CENTER OF THEIR OPERATIONS...

NOT ANYMORE.

EVERY SYSTEM HAS BEEN WIPED CLEAN. THEY *KNEW* YOU'D BE COMING.

THIS IS BAD, BATMAN... I HAVE NO IDEA *WHAT* THEY'LL DO TO SARAH NOW.

HH. I THINK THIS IS FOR YOU.

HARMON.

THE BOY'S FEROCITY WAS VIEWED AS AN ADVANTAGE TO THE COURT OF OWLS.

GOTHAM CITY WAS GROWING STRONGER. THEY NEEDED STRENGTH IN THEIR NEXT TALON.

THAT IS PRECISELY WHAT THEY GOT.

BUT TALONS ARE MEANT TO BE SHADOW CREATURES, OFFERING SILENT DEATHS.

FELIX HARMON WAS BOLD.

AND IN TIME, HE GREW BOLDER STILL.

HE WANTED MORE THAN THE BLOOD THE COURT WAS OFFERING. HE WANTED THE CITY TO TREMBLE BENEATH HIS FEET.

AND IT WOULD.

YOU WILL SLAY THE MATRON OF THE CARPENTER HOUSE. HER CALLS FOR REFORM ARE BEING HEEDED. SHE MUST BE SNUFFED OUT.

AND NO *DAWDLING* THIS TIME, FELIX. WE ARE NOT HERE TO INDULGE YOUR *BLOODLUST.*

...YES, *GRANDMASTER.*

A SECRET COURT OF OWLS BASE IN GOTHAM CITY. NOW...

YOU ALLOWED THE GIRL TO **ESCAPE.** YOU ALERTED THE **BATMAN** TO OUR ACTIVITIES, AS WELL AS THE POLICE.

THIS FAILURE CANNOT **STAND.**

IT'S TIME WE PUT YOU BACK AMONG THE **UNWORTHY.** THAT TITLE SEEMS MORE FITTING NOW THAN EVER.

CLK

IS THIS WHEN THOSE LITTLE MARBLES I PLUCKED OUT FROM BEHIND MY EYES WERE SUPPOSED TO **EXPLODE?**

I THINK YOU'VE JUST GIVEN A STRAY DOG A VERY BAD DAY, **WYCLIFFE.**

WHAT IS THIS--

YOU'VE OFFERED ME SOME FUN, I'LL GIVE YOU THAT, BUT YOU'RE JUST LIKE THE OTHERS WERE ALL THOSE YEARS AGO.

YOU ARE SIMPLY STANDING IN MY WAY.

YOU CANNOT DO THIS, FELIX. WE WILL STOP YOU.

I LOOK FORWARD TO YOUR TRYING.

BUT UNTIL THEN, I HAVE FIFTEEN DECADES OF HARD WORK TO CATCH UP ON.

THANK YOU FOR EVERYTHING YOU'VE DONE...I DIDN'T THINK ANYWHERE IN THIS CITY WOULD BE SAFE FROM THEM...

MEANWHILE, IN WAYNE ENTERPRISES...

...MR. FOX.

I GREW UP WITH ***ERIC WASHINGTON***, CALVIN. I WAS IN THE HOSPITAL THE NIGHT CASEY WAS BORN. I CONVINCED THE SECURITUS BOARD THAT SHE WAS READY TO BE A ***CEO*** AFTER HER FATHER'S DEATH.

YOU CAN'T IMAGINE MY RELIEF THAT SHE'S BEEN ALIVE ALL THESE YEARS, AND I WILL DO EVERYTHING IN MY POWER TO MAKE THE BEST OF THIS SITUATION. AS YOU CAN SEE.

I'VE VOUCHED FOR HER TO BOTH BRUCE WAYNE ***AND*** BATMAN. SHE CAN STAY HERE AS LONG AS SHE NEEDS TO. AND PLEASE...

...CALL ME ***LUCIUS.***

I'VE SET HER UP WITH A BED HERE IN MY OFFICE. YOUR FRIENDS HAVE REFUSED TO LEAVE HER SIDE, WHILE YOU'VE BEEN SCOUTING.

GOOD.

DID YOU FIND THE MONSTER WHO DID THIS TO HER, CALVIN?

NOT YET, ANYA...

THAT IS UNACCEPTABLE.

DOWN, GIRL.

I'LL SMACK HIM DOWN MYSELF. NEED TO START TRAINING MYSELF TO BE A *LEFTY* AND ALL.

THAT'LL BE GOOD PRACTICE.

I THOUGHT YOU SAID YOU COULD SAVE HER ARM, LUCIUS?

THAT CREATURE GROUND HER BONE INTO DUST. THE DOCTORS TRIED EVERYTHING THEY COULD, BUT I'M NOT QUITE FINISHED.

I'VE DESIGNED SEVERAL EXPERIMENTAL PROSTHETICS. STARTED WORKING ON THIS ONE, IN FACT.

WAYNE

GOD...

...I'LL *KILL* HIM. I PROMISE YOU THAT, CASEY. I'M GOING TO *DESTROY* THAT MONSTER.

SMACK

PULL YOURSELF TOGETHER, CAL.

THERE'S A LOT MORE AT STAKE HERE THAN MY STUPID ARM.

I *REFUSE* TO ALLOW MY DAUGHTER TO BECOME ONE OF *THEM.* DO YOU HEAR ME? I WILL *NOT* LET THAT HAPPEN.

FIND SARAH. *NOW.*

I PROMISE.

AND WHEN IT'S TIME TO GET HARMON, I'M GOING WITH YOU.

I'VE EARNED THOSE PUNCHES A HELL OF A LOT MORE THAN *YOU*, KIDDO.

CRASH

CAL, SOMEONE WANTS TO HAVE A WORD WITH YOU OUT THERE.

THINK *TERRIFYING.*

GREAT, THANKS, JOEY.

I'M SURE THESE ARE GOOD, BUT MY FATHER HAD SOME PRETTY RADICAL IDEAS ABOUT PROSTH--

YOUR FATHER CRIBBED THOSE DESIGNS OFF *ME*, CASEY.

AND I'VE SPENT THE LAST *DECADE* IMPROVING THEM.

YOU CALL THESE IMPROVEMENTS? A FRESHMAN ENGINEERING MAJOR COULD DO BETTER THAN THIS.

IS THAT SO?

GRAB YOUR PEN, OLD MAN.

WE'VE GOT SOME WORK TO DO.

LUCIUS HAS VOUCHED FOR *HER*, NOT FOR *YOU*, CALVIN ROSE.

I KNOW.

IF YOU HADN'T RUN THAT NIGHT, THIS WOULD BE OVER BY NOW.

DAMMIT, I KNOW THAT. YOU DON'T THINK I *KNOW* THAT?

YOU WANT ME TO SAY IT? I'M A *CRAPPY SUPERHERO! THERE!* I SAID IT.

THIS IS NEVER WHAT I *WANTED.*

HH.

THE COURT OF OWLS HAS GONE BACK INTO HIDING. YOUR MONSTER... FELIX HARMON, *THE BUTCHER*... HAS GONE WITH IT.

TELL ME SOMETHING I DON'T KNOW.

TELL ME ABOUT *BANE.*

WHAT IS IT?

SOMETHING HAS MOVED SANTA PRISCA.

WHAT THE HELL DOES THAT MEAN?

THE ISLAND IS *MISSING.* IT APPEARS TO BE RELOCATED. THERE'S SOME CHRONAL ENERGY AT THE SCENE...BUT NOTHING ELSE.

GOD...

MY DRONES ARE TRACING EVERY POSSIBLE ROUTE TO GOTHAM CITY. THERE HAS BEEN NO SIGN OF THE WARSHIPS YOU DESCRIBED.

WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?

I DON'T KNOW. BUT I'M GOING TO FIND OUT.

WHERE DOES THAT LEAVE US?

I'LL LEAVE YOU WHAT INFORMATION I HAVE ON THE COURT. IT WOULD SEEM YOUR HISTORY WITH THEM MIGHT TRUMP MY OWN.

MIGHT?

FOR LUCIUS' SAKE... FOR *CASEY'S* SAKE... I WILL LET YOU AND YOUR FRIENDS FIND THEM. BUT WHEN YOU DO, YOU CALL ME IN.

YOU DO *NOT* ENGAGE ON YOUR OWN. DO YOU UNDERSTAND?

YOU CAN'T STOP ME FROM TAKING ON THE BUTCHER, BATMAN. NOT AFTER WHAT HE'S DONE!

I HAVE AN EMPTY CRYO-TUBE IN BLACKGATE THAT SAYS *DIFFERENT.* CALVIN.

WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?

NO MATTER WHAT WAY THIS GOES, CALVIN... TAKE THIS TO HEART.

THIS IS YOUR *FINAL* MISSION.

1862...

THE CARPENTER HOUSE FOR BOYS WAS THE OLDEST ORPHANAGE IN GOTHAM CITY.

IT WAS PROGRESSIVE FOR ITS TIME. THE CHILDREN WERE WELL TAKEN CARE OF.

PERHAPS THAT IS WHY THE COURT UNLEASHED HARMON UPON THEM. BUT IT SEEMS CLEAR THAT EVEN THEY HAD NO UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT THEY HAD DONE.

THE COST OF THAT MISSION WOULD HAUNT THE CITY FOR DECADES TO COME.

CREAK

IS SOMEONE THERE?

H-HELLO?

SHHH...

...THEY'RE SLEEPING.

IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO SAY WHAT HE WAS THINKING WHEN HE SET THE BUILDING ON FIRE.

WHAT IS CLEAR IS THAT THIS WAS THE NIGHT FELIX HARMON STOPPED BEING A MERE TALON.

HIS OWN LEGEND WAS BIRTHED IN THE FIRES THAT RAVAGED THE BUILDING.

BAPTIZED IN THE BLOOD OF THE 117 PEOPLE INSIDE.

THAT IS THE NIGHT THE GOTHAM BUTCHER WAS BORN.

EXCERPTED FROM THE SECRET HISTORY OF THE COURT OF OWLS.

ERASTUS CLARK. 1963.

NOW...

THEY NEVER CAME BACK FROM WHAT YOU DID HERE, FELIX.

IT'S BEEN LEFT ROTTING LIKE AN OPEN WOUND ON THIS CITY FOR OVER 150 YEARS. WHEN I WAS A BOY, THEY SAID IT WAS HAUNTED BY THE *CHILDREN* TRAPPED, *BURNING* WITHIN.

THEY WERE ALL DEAD BEFORE THE FIRES BEGAN.

I KNOW.

HOW?

SAME AS HOW I KNEW THIS IS WHERE YOU'D TURN UP, EVENTUALLY.

THERE'S A WHOLE CHAPTER ON YOU IN THERE. I STILL REMEMBER THE CHILLS IT GAVE ME THE FIRST TIME I READ IT.

IT'S WHY I NEVER ONCE CONSIDERED BRINGING YOU BACK, WHEN THE COURT OF OWLS WAS UNDER MY CONTROL.

MY NAME IS *SEBASTIAN CLARK.* I TRUST YOU'VE HEARD OF ME.

YOU AREN'T EVEN A *MAN*, ARE YOU? YOU'RE SIMPLY A FORCE OF NATURE. *DEATH* INCARNATE.

YES. SHALL I SHOW YOU?

KILL ME IF YOU WANT, BUT THEN YOU WON'T EVER GET WHAT YOU'RE *TRULY* AFTER.

ALL MY PLANS THESE PAST MANY MONTHS, ALL MY INTR CATE DESIGNS FOR RECLAIMING POWER, HAVE *CRUMBLED* IN MY GRASP.

COMING BACK HERE IN FAILURE, IN THE BOAT FROM SANTA PR,SCA, A NEW PLAN EMERGED IN THE BACK OF MY MIND.

SOMETHING S,MPLE. SOMETHING ELEGANT.

SOMETHING THAT WILL BR NG YOUR TALENTS TO LIGHT. SHOW THE WORLD WHAT YOU'RE *REALLY* CAPABLE OF.

AND WHAT MIGHT THAT PLAN BE?

THINK OF EVERYONE WHO'S WRONGED US...CALVIN ROSE, CASEY WASH,NGTON, JOHN WYCLIFFE, THE COURT, ALL THEIR CRONIES AND TALONS...LET'S END THEM ALL, FELIX. END *EVERYTHING* THEY CARE ABOUT.

LET'S KILL GOTHAM CITY!

DO YOU LIKE IT, SARAH?

IT'S... IT'S VERY *PRETTY.*

YES, IT IS. IT'S YOURS IF YOU WANT IT. YOU DO *WANT* IT, DON'T YOU?

I... *THINK* I DO, MR. WYCLIFFE.

NO, DEAR, THERE'S NO NEED FOR *THINKING* ANYMORE. WE'VE TAKEN CARE OF THAT.

I MISS MY MOMMY.

Ah. WELL...

...MOMMY'S NOT COMING FOR YOU, DEAR. WE'RE ALL YOU HAVE LEFT NOW. IT'S TIME TO LET GO OF THE PAST AND GIVE THAT LOVE TO *US.*

YOU DO *LOVE* US, DON'T YOU?

"THE MOST FRIGHTENING THING ABOUT *JOHN WYCLIFFE* IS THE FACT THAT HE DOESN'T REALLY *EXIST.*"

*LIKE ALL *GRANDMASTERS* OF THE *COURT OF OWLS*, HIS PAPER TRAIL HAS BEEN SCRUBBED CLEAN. THERE'S NO REAL SIGN OF THE WYCLIFFES WIELDING POWER IN GOTHAM AT ALL DURING THE 20TH CENTURY

*THE CLOSEST THING I CAN FIND IS A SIGNATURE ON THE ORIGINAL GOTHAM CHARTER BY A BARTHOLOMEW WYCLIFFE.

*THIS IS A CASE OF OLD MONEY. OLDER THAN GOTHAM ITSELF.

*BUT I KNOW, IF WE FIND HIM, WE FIND MY GIRL. WE FIND *SARAH.*

*AND UNTIL WE DO, WE'LL SCOUR EVERY LOCATION WITH EVEN THE *HINT* OF THE COURT'S INVOLVEMENT.

OWL FALL

JAMES TYNION IV WRITER
EMANUEL SIMEONI ARTIST
JEROMY COX COLORIST TAYLOR ESPOSITO LETTERER
KEN HUNT AND BRETT SMITH COVER
KATIE KUBERT EDITOR MIKE MARTS GROUP EDITOR

*THERE IS NO GIVING UP NOW. I WILL NOT *ALLOW* IT.

*WE KEEP GOING UNTIL MY GIRL IS *SAFE.*"

WE'VE *GOT* TO KEEP HER SAFE. FIND ANYTHING, CALVIN?

NO, CASEY... THEY'VE SLUNK BACK INTO THE SHADOWS... THERE'S NO SIGN OF THE COURT OF OWLS *ANYWHERE* IN GOTHAM CITY.

AND I CAN'T SHAKE THE FEELING THAT WE'RE RIGHT ON THE *VERGE* OF SOMETHING...

"...SOMETHING *TERRIBLE.*"

I'LL HAVE YOU KNOW, MR. CLARK, ***HARBOR HOUSE*** IS ONE OF THE OLDEST BUILDINGS IN GOTHAM!

IS THAT SO?

IT'S REALLY A REMARKABLE PROPERTY... NOW, I'M REQUIRED TO TELL YOU THAT THIS IS WHERE THOSE STRANGE ***SUICIDES*** TOOK PLACE A WHILE BACK. BUT I ASSUME YOU KNOW THAT ALREADY.

YES, I'D REALLY LIKE TO SEE ***WHERE*** IT HAPPENED...WHERE ALL THOSE PEOPLE IN OWL MASKS ***KILLED*** THEMSELVES.

SIR, I DON'T THINK--

TRUST ME, IT'LL ONLY MAKE THIS PLACE A MORE ***ATTRACTIVE*** BUY FOR ME. PLEASE... NOAH, WAS IT? HUMOR ME.

HERE WE ARE...

DO YOU BELIEVE IN THEM, NOAH?

SIR?

DO YOU BELIEVE THAT THE PEOPLE WHO DIED HERE WERE THE ***ACTUAL*** COURT OF OWLS?

WELL, THEY'RE ONLY A FAIRY TALE, AREN'T THEY? JUST SOMETHING TO FRIGHTEN KIDS INTO STAYING IN LINE, RIGHT?

SHRIP

SOMETHING LIKE THAT.

WHAT THE--?!

I RAN THE COURT OF OWLS FOR TWENTY-SIX YEARS, FELIX.

I RAN IT FROM THIS VERY ROOM.

UNTIL WILLIAM COBB, AND LINCOLN MARCH AND THAT DAMNED *BAT...*

SWIP

...THE USURPER, *WYCLIFFE*... I REMEMBER HIS FACE WHEN HE TOLD ME THAT GOTHAM CITY DIDN'T BELONG TO ME ANY LONGER. THAT IT WAS *HIS.*

WELL, LET'S SEE WHAT'S LEFT OF YOUR KINGDOM AFTER TONIGHT, JOHN...

...ARE THE BOMBS PLANTED?

OF COURSE. BUT YOU PROMISED ME **BLOOD**, SEBASTIAN... REAL BLOOD I CAN SEE RUNNING DOWN MY CLAWS...

THE ORCHARD HOTEL

Oh, FELIX... THERE WILL BE *PLENTY* OF BLOOD TONIGHT.

"IT HAS TO BE *THE ORCHARD,* CALVIN!"

I'M TELLING YOU, CASEY, IT CAN'T BE...THEIR BASE INSIDE...*EDEN*... WAS TOTALLY SEALED OFF. EVEN IF THEY MADE THEIR WAY IN, THERE'S NO OXYGEN FLOW...THE ENTIRE THING IS A *GOLDEN TOMB.*

YOU'RE THINKING TOO *LITERALLY*, CALVIN. THEY WANT TO LIE LOW. THEY WANT TO KEEP THEIR NAMES OFF THE RADAR. THEY OWN A FREAKING LUXURY HOTEL.

AND?

AND MISS CASEY IS SAYING THEY ARE STAYING IN THE HOTELS. AS *GUESTS*. PROBABLY A WHOLE FLOOR.

IT IS LOW-FI, YES, BUT THEY WOULDN'T HAVE TO PUT IT UNDER THEIR *TRUE* NAMES. ALL FAKE NAMES. THE SYSTEM WOULDN'T SHOW IT.

I STILL THINK THERE'S SOMETHING MORE TO *AMUSEMENT MILE.*

ANYA COULD BE RIGHT. CASEY SENT THE TWO OF US ON A RESCUE MISSION TO A RESORT ISLAND IN THE PACIFIC THREE YEARS AGO. WE WERE LOOKING FOR THEIR *BASE*, BUT THEY WERE JUST USING THEIR *OWN* VILLAS.

YOU'VE GONE OVER THE GROUNDS THERE A NUMBER OF TIMES... THEY'RE PICKING IT APART FOR SCRAPS.

I USED TO KNOW THE KID WHO WAS GOING TO RUN THE PLACE. APPARENTLY HE'S OUT OF THE CITY NOW.

CALVIN.

I WILL GO WITH JOEY TO THE MILE OF THE AMUSEMENTS. EDGAR STAYS GUARD. YOU GO TO THE HOTEL, YES?

BUT WHAT IF YOU RUN INTO SOME-THING?

I WAS TRAINED BY THE *LEAGUE OF ASSASSINS*. JOEY IS EX-*YAKUZA*. WE CAN TAKE CARE OF OURSELVES.

COME NOW, JOEY.

YES, MA'AM.

ED, GIVE US A MOMENT?

WE NEED TO START TO THINK--

NO.

WE NEED TO START TO THINK ABOUT NEXT STEPS IF WE CAN'T *FIND* SARAH.

WE *WILL* FIND HER.

I'M SORRY. OF COURSE WE WILL.

I'M SORRY FOR MORE THAN THAT. I'M SORRY FOR ALL OF THIS... I'M SORRY HOW COLD MY HAND MUST BE RIGHT NOW... I'M SORRY THAT I CAN'T *FEEL* YOUR WARMTH.

I'M NOT GOING TO LEAVE YOU EVER AGAIN, CASEY. I HOPE YOU KNOW THAT.

I KNOW, CAL. I KNOW.

I LOVE YOU.

THEN GET YOUR ASS OVER TO THAT HOTEL, ZOMBIE BOY.

YOU HAVE WORK TO DO.

THE ORCHARD HOTEL
LATER...

THE ORCHARD HOTEL

THE 13TH FLOOR.

WHAT'S THIS?

WHAT'S GOING ON IN HERE?

NO... NOT HERE.

THIS IS YOUR GRAND-MASTER TALKING. SOMEONE HAS BROKEN INTO OUR HOTEL...

...IS ANY-ONE THERE? DAMMIT! *ANSWER ME!*

HEY, BOSS.

IT'S FUNNY. THAT SANTA PRISCA TRIP DIDN'T *KILL* ME AFTER ALL.

BUT WHEN I CAME HOME, IT LOOKS LIKE YOU ALL RAN AWAY FROM ME AGAIN.

NO. NO MORE TRICKERY.

YOU'VE RUINED MY LIFE PLENTY THIS YEAR, WYCLIFFE...

...TURNED ME INTO SOME KIND OF MONSTER. TRIED TO ENSLAVE ME. *AGAIN.*

THERE'S ONLY *ONE* BIT OF INFORMATION I WANT FROM YOU BEFORE I TURN YOU OVER TO THE BAT AND THE POLICE.

CALVIN?! PLEASE-- THERE'S NO TIME. HE'S--

LISTEN TO ME... HE'S--

WHERE IS SARAH WASHINGTON?

HUSH NOW...

...I'VE GOT HER RIGHT HERE.

EDEN.

DEEP IN THE HEART OF THE ORCHARD HOTEL...

HELLO, BENJAMIN.

I WONDER IF YOU CAN *HEAR* ME IN THERE?

PERHAPS YOU WOULDN'T KNOW WHO I AM...

I'M THE MAN WHO ENGINEERED THE *FALL* OF EDEN. I HAVE TO ADMIT, I ALWAYS FOUND THE PLACE *GAUDY.*

NO DISRESPECT TO YOUR FATHER. I KNOW THIS WAS HIS MASTERPIECE. YOU MIGHT NOT AGREE, BUT HE WAS A MARVELOUS GRANDMASTER OF THE COURT. I ADMIRED HIM GREATLY.

IT'S WHY I HID MY MASK HERE...THE *MASK OF THE GRANDMASTERS.*

BUT ALAS, MY INTENTIONS WILL NOT HONOR HIS LEGACY VERY WELL.

ARMED

00:04:59

TONIGHT THE ORCHARD FALLS. AND GOTHAM CITY WITH IT.

Ah, THERE WE GO...THE TIMER HAS STARTED. I HAVE A PRIOR ENGAGEMENT UPSTAIRS. I'M SURE YOU'LL UNDERSTAND.

Ta ta, BENJAMIN. I HOPE YOU ENJOY YOUR NEXT DEATH MORE THAN THE LAST.

MMM

DAMMIT. I JUST LOST ALL COMMUNICATIONS WITH CALVIN.

I KNEW IT. I *KNEW* THIS WOULD BE THE PLACE.

WHAT WILL YOU DO? THE *BATMAN* SSSAID--

I *KNOW* WHAT BATMAN SAID, EDGAR. HE SAID HE'D LOCK UP CALVIN WITH THE OTHER TALONS IN BLACKGATE IF WE WENT STORMING IN WITHOUT HIM.

GET LUCIUS. NOW. I KNOW WHAT WE HAVE TO DO.

BUT THIS ISN'T *HIS* FIGHT.

PUT THE GIRL DOWN, BUTCHER.

WHY WOULD I DO THAT?

YOU WANT TO KILL ME, DON'T YOU?

WELL, LET'S SEE IF YOU CAN MAKE GOOD ON THAT THREAT. YOU'VE FAILED AT EVERYTHING ELSE SINCE THEY DRAGGED YOU OUT OF YOUR TOMB. I HAVE TO SAY I LIKE MY ODDS.

Umph!

VERY WELL, MR. ROSE.

TO THE DEATH, THEN?

SECONDARY CHANNELS OPEN. CAN YOU HEAR ME? GOOD.

I WANT EVERY TALON IN A FIFTEEN-MILE RADIUS AT THE ORCHARD HOTEL *IMMEDIATELY.*

I'M GETTING OUT OF HERE.

I DON'T THINK SO, JOHN.

SEBASTIAN?!

ELECTRUM'S A WONDERFUL THING... I SOMETIMES WONDER HOW THEY CHOSE IT TO IMBED INTO OUR EARLIEST TALONS. IT'S SUPPORTED OUR HISTORY FROM THE BEGINNING.

R.H. ORCHARD EVEN DECIDED THAT RATHER THAN MAKING THE TREE AT THE HEART OF EDEN OUT OF *PURE* GOLD, HE'D MAKE IT OUT OF AN ALLOY. GOLD AND SILVER *TOGETHER.*

WELL, IT'S FUNNY WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU SPRAY ELECTRUM WITH A FOAM COMPOUND I DEVELOPED... IT *DRAWS OUT* THE SILVER AND IT STARTS TO CRYSTALLIZE INTO SILVER FULMINATE.

HIGHLY *EXPLOSIVE,* YOU KNOW. A TICKING TIME BOMB WITH NO FUSE TO CUT. AND WITH ALL THAT ELECTRUM DOWN-STAIRS...

...LET'S JUST SAY IT'S GOING TO BE A *FIERY NIGHT* IN GOTHAM.

BUT... YOU'LL DIE, TOO, SEBASTIAN.

NOT BEFORE *YOU*, OLD FRIEND.

BAM

IS THAT *YOU*, MR. CLARK?

YES, MY DEAR. HOW ARE THE BOYS FARING AGAINST EACH OTHER?

I...I DON'T KNOW. I THINK THE *BAD MAN* IS GOING TO KILL HIM. BUT...

...I WANT TO DO IT. I WANT TO RIP CALVIN ROSE *APART* WITH MY OWN HANDS!

IT SOUNDS LIKE *FUN.*

IT CERTAINLY DOES, MY DEAR. AND PERHAPS YOU'LL STILL HAVE YOUR CHANCE...

BOOM.

ALL RIGHT...

...I THINK I'VE HAD ENOUGH.

YOU REMEMBER THIS SERUM...YOU USED IT ON THE LITTLE TALON GIRL WHO GOT AWAY...OUR MUTE MARY.

AH, IT SEEMS WE HAVE AN AUDIENCE OF OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS.

IT'S OVER, HARMON. THERE ARE TOO MANY OF US TO DEFEAT ON YOUR OWN.

STAND DOWN!

I AM YOUR GRANDMASTER NOW, AND I ORDER YOU TO BACK OFF!

WELL, THERE'S NO ESCAPE FROM THIS, CALVIN. THIS IS YOUR TRUE DEATH.

DO ME A FAVOR AS YOU START TO DIE...THINK OF ALL THE TERRIBLE THINGS I'M GOING TO DO TO CASEY AND HER LITTLE GIRL.

AND REMEMBER THAT IT'S ALL YOUR FAULT.

WHAT IS--

Heh.

YOU HAVE TO BE KIDDING ME.

NO... I WANTED TO *SEE* IT... I WANTED TO SEE HIM *DIE!*

...I GUESS I'LL JUST HAVE TO DO IT *MYSELF.*

"ALL RIGHT..."

...IT'S TIME WE END THIS SORRY TALE ONCE AND FOR ALL.
WAYNE

The only thing I truly remember from my childhood is the moment I knew I was going to die.

I can still feel the panic that surged through my body.

The hopelessness... the feeling of being trapped forever.

I feel it again now. My body is breaking down. Disintegrating from the inside... the Court of Owls' **death serum** coursing through my veins.

Not enough to make a clean job of it... but for the first time since my resurrection... I can feel the pain taking over.

But there's strength enough in me to fight...

THE COURT OF OWLS' STRONGHOLD... ON THE 13TH FLOOR OF THE ORCHARD HOTEL.

...strength enough to fight for the very last time.

END OF THE RUN

JAMES TYNION IV WRITER EMANUEL SIMEONI ARTIST
JEROMY COX COLORIST DEZI SIENTY LETTERER
EMANUEL SIMEONI AND BRETT SMITH COVER
KATIE KUBERT EDITOR MIKE MARTS GROUP EDITOR

CASEY!

No...just stand up...you have to save her...

ARE YOU DYING?

DON'T YOU WORRY, SARAH... I MIGHT BE, BUT I'M GOING TO GET YOU SOMEPLACE *SAFE*, FIRST.

I DON'T *NEED* SAVING, CALVIN ROSE...

SLC

...THIS IS *EXACTLY* WHERE I WANT TO BE.

=GHUCK=

...SEBASTIAN... YOU BRAINWASHED SARAH...?

OH, HELLO AGAIN, OLD FRIEND.

NO, BUT I DESIGNED THE *SERUM* COURSING THROUGH YOUR VEINS-- BEFORE I LEFT THE COURT, A FINAL *CONTINGENCY* AGAINST THE TALONS I WAS RAISING TO TAKE THE CITY DOWN.

IT'S A PITY THE DOSE WASN'T STRONG ENOUGH TO MAKE YOUR *TRUE* DEATH *QUICK*. BUT IT'LL BE ENOUGH TO SHUT DOWN YOUR HEALING FACTOR

COME, MY DEAR, WE DON'T WANT TO MISS THE FIREWORKS.

I *LOVE* FIREWORKS, MR. CLARK...

FELIX... TAKE CARE OF THIS *MESS* FOR ME.

MY PLEASURE.

I'VE BEEN PROMISED THIS DEATH FOR A LONG TIME, CALVIN. THE COURT BROUGHT THE **GOTHAM BUTCHER** BACK FROM THE DEAD FOR THIS SINGULAR PURPOSE...

...BUT I PROMISE YOU, I'M NOT CRUEL ENOUGH TO ROB YOU OF THESE FINAL MOMENTS WITH THOSE YOU LOVE. I'LL RIP YOUR BODY OPEN AND LET IT BLEED HELPLESS ON THE GROUND AS I TEAR THEM TO PIECES IN FRONT OF YOU.

AND YOUR DEAR **CASEY WASHINGTON**... I HAVE SPECIAL PLANS FOR HER...

DO YOU, NOW?

WHAT IS THIS? YOU WANT TO EVEN THE ODDS? I CAN KILL YOU JUST AS EASILY WITH ONE ARM.

TRUST ME, FELIX.

SO CAN *I*.

WHRRRRRR

BCHOWW

DO ALL YOU WANT, GIRL...I AM A NIGHTMARE THAT WILL STALK THIS CITY FOREVER. THERE IS NO KILLING M--

TSSS

OH SHUT THE HELL UP AND *DIE* ALREADY!

...THAT FELT EVEN BETTER THAN I *THOUGHT* IT WOULD.

CASEY...

SHHH... THIS SHOULD STOP THE WOUND FROM GETTING WORSE...

I HAVE A FEELING IT'S A GOOD THING I CAN'T SMELL MUCH ANYMORE.

TSSSS

YOU'RE TELLING ME...

YOU KNOW WE'RE GOING TO *DIE* TONIGHT, DON'T YOU? EVEN IF THE SERUM DOESN'T DO THE JOB... THE BOMB WE PLANTED BELOW...

IF WE DO, WE DIE *TOGETHER*. WE DIE TRYING TO STOP THIS. WE DIE TRYING TO GET MY DAUGHTER BACK FROM THAT MONSTER, SEBASTIAN CLARK.

UMM... GUYS?

MAYBE LET'S KEEP OUR HEADS IN THE GAME... WELL... FOR AS LONG AS WE CAN KEEP THEM, ANYWAYS... WE STILL HAVE A *TALON* PROBLEM HERE.

JOEY'S RIGHT-- THERE ISN'T TIME FOR THIS...

CASEY, SET ME ON *FIRE*.

WHAT?! NO! YOU'RE NOT STRONG ENOUGH...

IT DOESN'T MATTER, JUST DO IT. THE REST OF YOU GET TO THE BOMB. SHUT IT DOWN. I'LL TAKE CARE OF THESE GUYS.

KARK!

I'LL FIND YOUR DAUGHTER, I PROMISE... YOU JUST MAKE SURE WE LIVE LONG ENOUGH TO MAKE IT WORTHWHILE.

NOW, I NEVER GOT TO USE THIS CRYO-BOMB WHEN I WAS STILL WARM-BLOODED. AND IT SEEMED LIKE *SUICIDE* TO TRY AFTER THE FACT.

BUT THIS CITY IS PRIMED TO BLOW, AND YOU GUYS ARE STANDING IN MY WAY...AND IF THE ONLY WAY OUT IS SUICIDAL... WELL...

I'VE DIED *ONCE*, ALREADY.

CLK

FWOOM!

ALL RIGHT... TIME TO *END* THIS.

MEANWHILE, ON THE ROOF...

THIS IS MADNESS, SEBASTIAN. YOU CAN'T TRULY BE THINKING OF *DOING* THIS.

WE REFUSE TO BELIEVE THAT YOU WOULD BE SO SMALL-MINDED.

THE ORCHARD

SMALL-MINDED? *SMALL-MINDED?!*

I TOOK THE COURT FROM BEING A *FAIRY TALE* TO BEING ONE OF THE WEALTHIEST CONGLOMERATIONS ON THE PLANET. I LED YOU TO *POWER* YOU COULD SCARCELY DREAM OF...

...I RAISED AN ARMY FOR YOU FROM THE DEPTHS OF OUR HISTORY! I BROUGHT BACK THE *TALONS!*

HOW DARE YOU CALL ME SMALL-MINDED!

...ISN'T IT, SEBASTIAN?

YOU WERE THE ONES WHO COULDN'T SEE THE FORCES YOU WERE DEALING WITH. YOU WERE THE ONES WHO CAST ME TO THE DOGS.

AND NOW YOU'LL *BURN* FOR IT. EACH AND EVERY LAST ONE OF YOU WILL BURN!

DESTRUCTION. THAT'S ALL YOU KNOW...

YOU *RIPPED* ME OUT OF THE CIRCUS AS A BOY...*MANIPULATED* ME INTO BECOMING SOMETHING I HATED SO MUCH I WANTED TO DIE...

...THEN, YEARS LATER, YOU HAD TO COME BACK AND DO IT ALL *AGAIN*... YOU HAD TO *FORCE ME* BACK INTO THIS LIFE WITH LIES AND FALSE FRIENDSHIPS.

CALVIN--?!

NO!

I'M SORRY ABOUT THE TRANQ DART, SARAH...YOU'LL UNDERSTAND LATER.

PSFT

I MIGHT DIE TONIGHT, YES. YOU'VE MADE SURE OF THAT. BUT I'M GOING TO MAKE YOU HURT FIRST, SEBASTIAN.

CALVIN, LISTEN TO ME.

NO. I'VE LISTENED TO YOUR LIES LONG ENOUGH!

:KOFF: IT DOESN'T MATTER, CALVIN.. NONE OF THIS MATTERS. THIS BUILDING IS GOING TO EXPLODE AND TAKE HALF THE CITY WITH IT YOU'LL DIE. I'LL DIE.

YOU CAN PUNCH ME ALL YOU WANT, BUT THERE'S NO COMING BACK FROM THIS

YOU THINK SO, DO YOU?

YOU SHOULD HAVE KNOWN YOU COULDN'T KILL US. WE ARE THE COURT OF OWLS. WE WILL LIVE AS LONG AS THIS CITY STANDS...AND WE ARE MORE THAN CAPABLE OF WIELDING IT AS A WEAPON.

AH, LOOK. THE CAVALRY IS HERE. IT'LL BE MUCH EASIER TO KILL YOU IN PRISON, DON'T YOU THINK?

SWAT

GOODBYE, SEBASTIAN. ZZT

NO! GET AWAY!

THE WHOLE BUILDING COULD EXPLODE AT ANY MOMENT!

NOT ANYMORE...

...I'VE BEEN MON TORING YOUR RADIO NETWORK, CALVIN. ATTEMPTING TO TRIGGER A MASSIVE EXPLOSION USING THE *ELECTRUM*. CLEVER WORK.

NOT CLEVER ENOUGH, THOUGH. THIS IS OVER.

I TOLD YOU NOT TO TAKE THIS ON ALONE. I'LL DEAL WITH YOU IN A MOMENT.

NO! IT'S NOT *FAIR!*

IT'S NOT *FAIR!*

OH, BABY, WHAT DID THEY *DO* TO YOU...?

GET OFF ME, WOMAN!

HUSH NOW..

...AFTER THIS HYPO, THIS WILL ALL BE NOTHING BUT A VERY *BAD DREAM.*

PFFT

IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME SINCE THE *LABYRINTH*, SEBASTIAN CLARK...

NO...

...YOU AND I ARE GOING TO HAVE A LONG CONVERSATION ABOUT THE PRESENT WHEREABOUTS OF *LINCOLN MARCH.*

IT'S NOT GOING TO BE A *PLEASANT* CONVERSATION.

;HOPE; SORRY, BATS... LOOKS LIKE YOU'RE NOT GOING TO GET THE CHANCE TO PUT ME IN COLD STORAGE AFTER...

...AFTER...

CALVIN!

DON'T YOU *DARE*, CALVIN ROSE... AFTER EVERYTHING WE'VE BEEN THROUGH. AFTER ALL THESE YEARS...

...WE'RE GOING TO FIX THIS. YOU'RE GOING TO BE *OKAY*.

SHH... IT'S OKAY... EKOPE!

EVERYTHING IS OKAY NOW. DON'T YOU SEE? THIS IS WHAT... THIS IS WHAT I ALWAYS WANTED.

YOU'RE SAFE... YOU'RE FINALLY SAFE, CASEY. AND I'M...

...I'M FREE.

THE SERUM IS TAKING HOLD, BATMAN... WE HAVE TO ACT FAST!

SECURITUS ISLAND. THREE WEEKS LATER...

--GOTHAM CITY STILL REELING FROM THE SURPRISE RETURN OF CASEY WASHINGTON, HEIR TO THE SECURITUS COMPANY AND FORTUNE--

--FIGURE ARRESTED IN ALLEGED CONNECTION TO RECENT TERRORIST ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING THE SO-CALLED NIGHT OF THE OWLS--

--PURCHASED BY WAYNE INDUSTRIES, WHERE MS. WASHINGTON HAS BEEN MADE A MEMBER OF THE BOARD, TASKED WITH RUNNING HER FATHER'S SECURITY EMPIRE--

LOOK, HE'S WAKING UP.

WHO--

WHO THE HELL DO YOU *THINK?*

SO... UH... WHERE ARE MY PANTS?

I'M THE BOSS NOW. YOU DON'T GET PANTS UNTIL I *SAY* YOU GET PANTS.

WHEN IN YOUR LIFE HAVE YOU EVER *NOT* BEEN THE BOSS?

TOUCHÉ. AND HERE.

WHY AM I STILL *ALIVE?* THE SERUM--

YOU'VE BEEN IN *DIALYSIS* FOR THE LAST THREE WEEKS, WHILE WE'VE BEEN WORKING TO GET THE DEATH SERUM OUT OF YOUR SYSTEM LONG ENOUGH FOR YOU TO START HEALING.

LUCIUS AND I HAVE BEEN PORING OVER YOUR BLOOD TO GET THE RIGHT LEVELS OF *ELECTRUM*...HONESTLY, I THINK WE MAY HAVE OVERSHOT IT...YOU'VE BEEN HEALING, BUT NOT AS QUICKLY AS YOU DID BEFORE...IT TOOK A WHILE TO GET YOU BACK.

I WAS HOPING IT WOULD DO A LOT MORE...IT'S GOING TO TAKE A LOT MORE TO BRING YOU BACK TO WHAT YOU WERE. YOU'RE NOT QUITE *ALIVE* JUST YET...

IT DOESN'T MATTER, CASEY. I'M HERE.

I THOUGHT YOU WERE *GONE*, CALVIN...FOR A WHILE, IT DIDN'T LOOK LIKE WE'D BE ABLE TO...

...I'VE DREAMED OF THIS LIFE FOR SEVEN YEARS, CALVIN. SINCE THE DAY YOU SHOWED UP IN MY PENTHOUSE AND SAVED MY LIFE...SAVED *SARAH'S* LIFE...

...I WAS BEGINNING TO THINK WE WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO *ENJOY* IT TOGETHER

I'M NOT GOING ANYWHERE THIS TIME, CASEY. I'M *NEVER* RUNNING AWAY AGAIN. JUST TELL ME... THE COURT OF OWLS...?

*IN HIDING...SEBASTIAN'S THE ONLY ONE THEY'VE LEFT HIGH AND DRY WITH NO LEGAL PROTECTION...HE'S IN *BLACKGATE PENITENTIARY* NOW.

AND FELIX HARMON...WELL, SEE FOR YOURSELF...

...BATMAN WOULDN'T LOCK HIM UP WITH THE OTHER TALONS, WHEN THEY REALIZED HE WASN'T REALLY *DEAD*. HIS BODY WAS *RECONNECTING*, AND IT WAS ONLY A MATTER OF TIME.

I ONLY TRUST LOCKS I BUILT *MYSELF* TO HOLD THIS MONSTER. THAT ROOM IS BEING KEPT AT *ABSOLUTE ZERO*.

AS LONG AS I LIVE, I WILL NEVER LET HIM GO FOR WHAT HE DID TO US... TO ME...

THERE'S NOTHING TO RUN AWAY FROM ANYMORE. IT'S REALLY OVER... ISN'T IT?

NOT...NOT QUITE. SARAH, MY BABY...WELL, IT'S BEEN *DIFFICULT*...

"LUCIUS FOUND A WOMAN NAMED *LESLIE THOMPKINS*... AN OLD FRIEND OF BRUCE WAYNE.

"THEY'RE TRYING TO OVERWRITE THE *BRAINWASHING*... BUT, WELL...

"...IT'S GOING TO TAKE TIME.

"BUT WE *HAVE* TIME NOW. SHE'LL BE HERSELF SOON, I KNOW IT. SHE'S A WASHINGTON. SHE'S *STRONG*."

AND BATMAN!

HE'S DECIDED THAT IT'S OKAY FOR US TO KEEP OPERATING...

...I'M GOING TO TAKE MY NETWORK TO A MUCH LARGER SCALE. WE'RE GOING TO SAVE THE PEOPLE WHO *NEED* SAVING, JUST LIKE WE ALWAYS WANTED TO DO. BUT...

...THERE'S A CATCH.

A CATCH?

CALVIN! YOU'RE ALIVE! WELL, KIND OF...

GOOD TO SEE YOU TOO, JOEY...

I'M GLAD YOU ARE WELL, CALVIN... THE OTHERS ARE GETTING BRIEFED ON THE NEW MISSION. THEY'RE EAGER TO TELL YOU WHAT'S HAPPENED.

YESSS. ANYA AND I BROUGHT THEM COFFEE.

I'D REALLY LIKE IT IF SOMEONE FILLED ME IN RIGHT ABOUT NOW... WHO'S DRINKING COFFEE, EDGAR? WHO WANTS TO TELL ME WHAT NOW?

YOU'VE BEEN *DRAFTED*, MATE.

I'M *DARK RANGER*. THIS IS *NIGHTRUNNER*.

WELCOME TO *BATMAN, INCORPORATED*.

ARE YOU READY TO SAVE THE WORLD?

I am not a man.

WILLIAM COBB HAS FALLEN.

WE HAVE A *NEW* TALON TO SERVE THE *COURT OF OWLS.*

FOR EVERY LIFE, A FEATHER

I am not a man.

I am something more. I am something less.

I am something else.

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ONE HOUR AGO...

YOU HAVE ENDURED THE *LABYRINTH* NOBLY, TALON..YET YOU HAVE ONE FINAL TEST...

*There is no fear of **death** for a **true** Talon. This is what I am thinking.*

...YOUR PREDECESSOR.

Like the phoenixes, we burn.

YOU'VE MADE IT THROUGH THE LABYRINTH, LITTLE HATCHLING. HERE WE ARE. FIGHT, NOW.

FIGHT FOR YOUR LITTLE *LIFE.*

Like the phoenixes, we fall.

Like the phoenixes, we rise again.

FIVE HOURS AGO...

I am thinking about my mother, here in the Labyrinth of the Owls.

No, I am not.

I do not have a mother.

I hatched from an egg, like Castor, like Pollux, like Helen of Troy.

I have no mother.

I have no father. I have no sisters.

I am not a man.

TEN HOURS AGO...

– I know now – what this fountain is. This is what I am thinking. –

This trick, this trap, that looks like a balm...

...that promises rest, and relief, and a chance to clear and cleanse one's mind...

...yet its waters are poison, like the poison my mother used...

...and bring only visions...

FIFTEEN HOURS AGO...

...of madness.

GOT TO KILL THEM AAAAAAALL, GOT TO KILL THEM AAAAAALL—

TWENTY HOURS AGO...

I am stronger than the roc of Persian legend.

THIRTY HOURS AGO...

I am faster than the firebird of Russian myth.

FORTY HOURS AGO...

I am purer than the dove of Noah's ark.

I am not a man.

TWO DAYS AGO...

I am chosen.

They stare at my face--my masters, the Owls. They think I am exotic.

For every life, a feather.

TWO MONTHS AGO...

Anubis, the Egyptian god of the dead, weighed each man's heart against a feather.

So many feathers.

So many lives.

ONE YEAR AGO...

Another bird for their menagerie.

THIS IS THE *HATCHLING* WITH WHICH THEY MEAN TO REPLACE ME?

HE'S *NOTHING*-- NOTHING BUT A PETTY LITTLE BOY...

EIGHTEEN MONTHS AGO...

"...WITH A PETTY LITTLE LIFE."

HEY CROW, HEY BLACKBIRD-- HOO-HOO, HEY!

NOT A CROW...

...AN *OWL.*

TWO YEARS AGO...

A Talon.

FOUR YEARS AGO...

I fell in with a troupe of performers calling themselves Haly's Circus.

I was not big enough to bend bars of iron with the strongmen.

I was not fleet enough to fly with the acrobats.

I was not spry enough to play the Houdini.

But alone among them all...

...I was without fear.

And I--and no other--was the one the Court of Owls chose. –
RRRRRG!

FIVE YEARS AGO...

They found me that night.

The performers.

The circus.

The birds.

SIX YEARS AGO...

Birds. This is what I am thinking, as I run away, through the terror of the night.

My mother named me for a bird.

Jonas. It means "dove."

For the dove of the Holy Spirit.

But my name has another meaning.

And that is "destroyer."

SEVEN YEARS AGO. 1918...

JONAS!

We were living in Georgia.

THEY'RE SICK, JONAS, THEY'RE ALL SICK!

THEY BROUGHT THE SICKNESS HERE!

The Spanish Flu came.

POISON IN THE SEED, AND RIFLES FOR THE HAWKS--

It took my sisters, and it took my father--

WE'VE GOT TO KILL THEM, JONAS!

WE'VE GOT TO KILL THEM AAAAALL!

And it drove my mother--

...a little bit mad.

NOW...

Heh heh... hssss... hee hee... HAA, HEE... hssss...

And all of this...

...is what I am thinking.

And then I am thinking nothing at all.

YESSSSSS...

WHAT WAS HIS NAME?

HE DOESN'T HAVE A NAME. MEN HAVE NAMES, AND HE ISN'T A *MAN.*

WHAT IS HE?

AN OWL.

A *TALON.*

Kill them. Yesss.

- Kill them all.

IT HAD BEEN DARK...IMPOSSIBLY DARK, FOR SO LONG.

OR IT FELT THAT WAY. IT ALWAYS DOES, IN THE DARK.

BUT THEN, FINALLY...THERE HAD BEEN LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL.

CALVIN ROSE, THE ESCAPE ARTIST WHO HAD BECOME THE TALON, HAD EXPERIENCED THAT SENSATION BEFORE.

IT HAD HAPPENED A FEW WEEKS AGO, WHEN HE HAD LEARNED OF THE BETRAYAL OF SEBASTIAN CLARK, A MAN HE HAD CONSIDERED...WELL, "FRIEND" ISN'T THE RIGHT WORD...AN "ALLY" IN THE BATTLE AGAINST THE COURT OF OWLS.

UNFORTUNATELY FOR CALVIN, CLARK HAD ALLIES, TOO...MOST NOTABLY THE MAN CALLED BANE, WHO HAD ONCE BROKEN THE BATMAN.

AND THEN BROKE CALVIN

KRAK

GOODBYE, CALVIN.

I'LL SEE YOU IN THE NEXT LIFE...

THERE HAD BEEN DARKNESS. IMPOSSIBLE DARKNESS. FOR SO LONG...

...AND THEN LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL.

HE'S COMING TO.

CALVIN WAS RESURRECTED BY THE COURT OF OWLS TO ACT AS THEIR ASSASSIN ONCE AGAIN.

CALVIN ROSE, THE ESCAPE ARTIST WHO HAD BECOME THE TALON, HAD PULLED OFF HIS GREATEST ESCAPE-- FROM DEATH ITSELF.

DEAD MAN'S PARTY

WRITTEN BY TIM SEELEY ART BY JORGE LUCAS
COLORS BY JEROMY COX LETTERS BY DEZI SIENTY
COVER BY EMANUEL SIMEONI & BRETT SMITH
EDITOR KATIE KUBERT GROUP EDITOR MIKE MARTS

AND EVER SINCE THAT DAY, DEATH HAS FOLLOWED...

...NEVER FAR BEHIND.

THREE DAYS AGO.
GOTHAM CITY.

I SUPPOSE IT'S AS GOOD A NIGHT AS ANY FOR A MURDER, *MISS CASEY.*

YEAH, WELL, *ANYA*, LET'S HOPE WE DON'T ATTRACT TOO MUCH ATTENTION.

AFTER *SECURITAS'* MERGER WITH *WAYNE ENTERPRISES*...

LEXCORP SECURITY BUILDING--GOTHAM BRANCH.
OUT OF BUSINESS.

...I THOUGHT *THIS* WOULD BE A GOOD PLACE TO BE ALONE AND OUT OF THE WAY.

LEXCORP

THIS TOWN IS CRAWLING WITH PEOPLE IN CAPES, ESPECIALLY WITH ALL OF CALVIN'S NEW *"BATMAN, INC."* FRATERNITY BROS RUNNING IN AND OUT FROM ALL OVER THE PLACE...

"...I IMAGINE THERE AREN'T MANY THINGS MORE EMBARRASSING FOR AN *ESCAPE ARTIST* THAN GETTING *SAVED* BY A *SUPERHERO.*"

HNF!

HNHG!

KRGHK

HNF!

SHRP

OW.

PTEW!

BLEH.

C'MON, BABIES. POP FOR POPPA.

KLK

C'MON, C'MON. LAST ONE.

C'MON, LITTLE LOCK. JUST...POP

CHK-CHK

DO IT!

CHN-KRAK

SHOULDN'T CALVIN HAVE THE LID OPEN BY NOW?

HM. SOMETHING IS WRONG, YES? I--

SWAP

SSSH

EDGAR, JUST *GO!* TAKE THE BOLT CUTTERS! YOU DON'T NEED THE EXTRA TANK!

OH, YESSS. RIGHT, JOEY.

OH, GOD...

AAAGGBBBBLL!

SOON...

THINGS HAVE BEEN A LOT MORE INTERESTING AROUND HERE SINCE YOU SHOWED UP, ROSE.

SECURITAS

HELL, CALVIN, WATCHING YOUR "WORKOUTS" IS BETTER THAN GOING TO A MOVIE, MAN!

ESSSPECIALLY WHEN THE ESSSCAPIST DOESN'T ESSSCAPE, RIGHT, JOEY?

YEAH, MAN, YOU SHOULD JUST GET MASSACRED EVERY TIME AND TAKE THIS ON THE ROAD. REALLY APPEAL TO THE DEMOGRAPHIC THAT ONLY WATCHES NASCAR FOR THE CRASHES!

HA.

CALVIN ROSE: THE UNESCAPIST!

WELCOME TO SECURITAS ISLAND RETINAL SCANS COMPLETE. CONGRATULATIONS. SELF-DESTRUCT SEQUENCE DEFERRED.

ANYONE UP FOR SOME REC ROOM PING-PONG? I FEEL LIKE CRUSSSHING SOME ENEMIES.

SECURITAS

I JUST TOOK A DIP IN GOTHAM HARBOR, EDGAR. MY BACTERIA HAVE BACTERIA.

I NEED A REALLY LONG SHOWER.

HMM.

GAH! ANYA!

YOU HAVE NOTHING I HAVE NOT SEEN. AND THERE ARE EYES AND EARS EVERYWHERE IN *SECURITAS*. BUT NOT HERE.

YOU CANNOT *FEEL*, CALVIN ROSE.

I...I JUST WANT TO BE ALONE.

NO. YOU DO NOT. YOU CANNOT FEEL AS YOU COULD WHEN YOU WERE *ALIVE*. CANNOT MANIPULATE SMALL LOCK PICK TOOLS LIKE YOU ONCE COULD.

NOT FEELING. BEING FRIGHTENED BY A LACK OF SENSATION. IT IS WHAT THE *LEAGUE OF ASSASSINS* ASKED OF ME. WHAT I COULD NOT DO. THIS I UNDERSTAND.

IT'S NOT...IT'S NOT JUST *THAT*.

THE FIRST TIME I HAD TO ESCAPE FROM A CAGE, IT WAS *DESPERATION.* I WOULD HAVE STARVED TO DEATH IF I DIDN'T GET OUT OF THERE.

BUT, THE WHOLE TIME I WAS CHIPPING AT THAT CHAIN, PART OF ME WAS TOTALLY CALM. A VOICE KEPT REMINDING ME THAT THE WORST CASE SCENARIO, IF I COULDN'T GET OUT OF THERE, WAS THAT I'D *DIE.*

I'D JUST GET TO SLEEP FOREVER. NO PAIN. NO FEAR. NO MEMORIES. *NOTHING.*

AND I THINK MAYBE THE REASON I EXCELLED SO MUCH AS AN ESCAPE ARTIST WAS THAT CALM VOICE COULD ALWAYS TAKE OVER. I NEVER PANICKED. I WASN'T AFRAID OF BEING *TRAPPED.*

THERE WAS *ALWAYS* ONE MORE ESCAPE.

"BUT DOWN THERE TODAY, THE VOICE TOLD ME THERE WAS A *NEW* POSSIBILITY.

"I WASN'T GOING TO DIE. IF I ENCOUNTERED A CAGE I COULDN'T GET OUT OF, IT MEANT BEING TRAPPED.

"WITH PAIN. WITH FEAR. WITH ALL MY THOUGHTS AND MEMORIES.

"*FOREVER.* IN THE DARK."

JUST THE POSSIBILITY OF THAT...THAT KIND OF *HELL...*

THERE WERE RUMORS AMONG THE ASSASSINS. *THE DEMON'S HEAD, RAS AL GHUL,* IS HUNDREDS OF YEARS OLD, THEY SAID.

"HE HAS POOLS OF GLOWING LIQUID WHICH CAN RESTORE DEAD FLESH. A GIFT FROM HEAVEN TO AID HIM IN HIS CAUSE.

"HE LAUGHS OFF ATTEMPTS BY HIS ENEMIES TO ASSASSINATE HIM. AND, HE KILLS WITH IMPUNITY...

"...BECAUSE *CHERNOBOG, THE BLACK GOD,* IS HIS PRISONER."

THERE IT IS AGAIN, *DR. BURNES.* THE IRREGULARITY IN, AHEM... *LORD DEATH MAN'S* HEARTBEAT. LAST TIME IT RESULTED IN A TAINTED BATCH OF *SHELLEY FORMULAE.*

SHOULD... SHOULD WE ALERT THE *DOCTOR*?

KEEP AN EYE ON IT, *DEGROOT*. DISPOSE OF THE NEXT BATCH. WE HAVE JUST ENOUGH THAT IT SHOULD GO UNNOTICED.

BUT CONTINUE THE EXSANGUINATION. WE ARE EXPECTED TO *INCREASE* QUANTITY.

AND *DOCTOR DARRK* WAS NEVER A PARTICULARLY PATIENT MAN...

...EVEN LESS SO NOW THAT HE HAS... *RETURNED*.

I DO NOT HAVE ANY FRIENDS AMONG THE *LEAGUE OF ASSASSINS*. BUT THERE ARE THOSE WHO OWE ME A *DEBT*.

I CAN ASSIST YOU, CALVIN ROSE. TO HELP YOU PERHAPS ESCAPE THIS CURSE OF *IMMORTALITY*.

BUT *CASEY WASHINGTON* CANNOT JOIN US ON OUR QUEST FOR THESE *LAZARUS PITS*. AND YOU MUST NOT TELL HER.

WHY?

SHE WILL NOT UNDER-STAND.

TRAPPED FOR ALL TIME IN AN IMPENETRABLE BOX, FOREVER UNTOUCHABLE.

FOR CASEY, THIS IS NOT A *NIGHT-MARE*...

...IT IS A *WONDERFUL DREAM*.

KARACHI, PAKISTAN. NOW.

YOU! DON'T GO! DON'T YOU KNOW?

CLOSE! *CLOSE*, DAMN YOU!

THIS PARTY WAS FOR YOU!

IT'S YOUR *DEATHDAY PARTY!*

LET US EXTINGUISH THE *CANDLES OF LIFE!* THEN, EAT CAKE!

YOU IDIOT!

YOU LET THAT MANIAC *FREE?!*

HE-- HE--OH, GOD.

LORD DEATH MAN'S HEART *STOPPED* COMPLETELY. WE COULDN'T GET IT STARTED, AND HIS BLOOD WENT INERT, AND THE PROCESSING WAS CONTAMINATING A HUGE BATCH, AND--

VOICE COMMAND! INITIATE SANITIZATION! SANITIZE!

SANITIZE. SANITY.

"SANITIZE FOR YOUR SANITY..."

MY GURU TAUGHT ME THAT PRETTY MUCH JUST MEANT "CLEAN YOUR DAMN HOUSE, LARRY!"

HE ALSO TAUGHT ME HOW TO CONTROL MY HEARTBEAT... YOU SEE--

I AM A *DEATH LORD!*

KRNCH

DON'T YOU GO GETTIN' FRESH WITH ME!

GUH!

NIIIICE ROBE. I LOST MINE.

YOU--YOU CAN *HAVE* IT. PLEASE--

THE COLD HAND OF DEATH! IT IS GENTLE! ALMOST A MASSAGE COMPARED TO--

DEATH'S SIZE TWELVE BOOT! GAAAAALOSH!

ARABIAN SEA. (TWO MILES OFF THE COAST OF KHARACHI.)

THIS IS THE LOCATION, MISS ANYA--THE *GATEWAY* TO THE PITS WHERE *THE DEMON* COMES TO BATHE IN VIRGIN BLOOD.

BOLSHOYE SPASIBO, *DACAR.*

IT IS A LONG WAY TO THE HATCH, AND EVEN THE TOUGHEST OF ALL *THE LEAGUE* WEAR AN OXYGEN--

WH--WHAT IS *CRAZY BIRD MAN* DOING?!

THANK YOU FOR THE HELP, MY FRIEND. REMEMBER, IF YOU WANT TO GET *OUT,* THERE IS A WAY NOW.

ANYA WAS USED TO STORIES ABOUT THE LEAGUE OF ASSASSINS AND ITS LEADER, **RA'S AL GHUL.** STORIES THAT SEEMED TO HAVE SPRUNG FROM SOMEONE'S MAD IMAGINATION.

BUT EVEN SHE WAS SURPRISED TO HEAR ABOUT THE CLANDESTINE **KARACHI LAB,** WHERE THE LIQUID THAT FILLED THE LAZARUS PITS WAS SUPPOSEDLY **CREATED.**

EVERY SIX MONTHS, SCIENTISTS FROM AROUND THE WORLD WERE FLOWN IN, AND SEALED INSIDE THE FACILITY.

THE ONLY OTHER ENTRANCE WAS A SUBTERRANEAN TUNNEL, RESERVED FOR FIELD AGENTS, ACCESSIBLE ONLY VIA A HATCH--

--LOCATED BENEATH ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY FEET OF **SHARK-INFESTED** OCEAN WATER.

FORTUNATELY FOR A **TALON**, THE CONDUCTIVE ELECTRUM COMPOUNDS THAT **THE COURT** USED TO REANIMATE HIS BODY CONFUSED THE FIELD-DETECTING **AMPULLAE OF LORENZINI** WITHIN THE SHARK'S HEAD, GIVING HIM A MOMENT TO STRIKE.

IT'S FORTUNATE FOR THE SHARK, TOO. OTHER POTENTIAL MEALS WILL BE LESS "PUNCHY."

THE LOCK ON THE HATCH IS THE "OLD FASHIONED" KIND, WHICH SUITS CALVIN ROSE JUST FINE.

--TO GET USED TO THE GRIP OF HIS NUMB, DEATHLY COLD **HANDS**.

GHK. THAT'S IT. JUST LET ME GO...IT'S THE PASSWORD...I PROMISE

IF THIS MISSION ISN'T SUCCESSFUL, HE REASONS, HE'LL NEED MORE PRACTICE LIKE THIS--

AND SO IT IS. WHAT YONDER **PUZZLE MAZE** AWAITS?!

HSSS

KNGH.

AND NOW, MY DEAR...

..."YE VARNISHED CADAVERS, AND GREY LOVELACES, YE GO TO LANDS UNKNOWN AND VOID OF BREATH..."

"THE DANCE OF DEATH." CHARLES BAUDELAIRE.

I ONLY KNOW POLKA. I HOPE THAT'S OKAY.

AIIIEEGHH!

MEANWHILE... IN AN EVEN MORE CLANDESTINE LAIR DEEPER DOWN...

HNGHK.

AGGHBBLK!

HNNH NHH HH.

U-UNACCEPTABLE LEVELS. YOU EXPECT ME TO *SURVIVE* LONG ENOUGH TO COMPLETE THE CONVERSION ON *THIS,* DEMON'S HEAD?! UNACCEPTABLE!

COMPUTER! WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON IN MY LAB?! WHY AM I AWAKE?!

EMERGENCY. DR DARRK. SHELLEY FORMULA PROCESSING UNIT.

...THAT WAS, AS THE SONG SAYS, *A BARREL OF FUN.*

NO. MY SUBJECT!

HERE. THE GPS TAGS SAY WE SHOULD HEAD HALF A KILOMETER NORTHWEST HERE. WE ARE CLOSE.

WHICH MEANS--

TAK

FOONSH

YOU OKAY, ANYA?

JUST CHECKING TO MAKE SURE YOU WERE ON YOUR GAME.

OH, IS THAT RIGHT?

NO. IT IS ONLY TIMES LIKE THIS THAT I THINK IT HAS BEEN TOO LONG SINCE MY LEAGUE TRAINING.

SHH! DO YOU HEAR...?

"...SINGING."

♫...COME BACK FROM THE GRAVE TO DESTROY YOU...♫

SOMEONE COMES.

♫...AT THE VERY LEAST I'LL ANNOY YOU...♫

YAAH!

CHTO?

SHRKTT-- TALON! ANYA! WHAT'S--ZZKR GOING ON?!

CASEY?

HOW?! IT IS NOT EVEN A COMMUNICATOR! SHUT IT OFF!

YOU'RE IN PAKISTAN?!

SNIFF

OH. NOT A GOOD TIME, CASEY.

NOT A GOOD TIME.

SANITIZATION INITIATED IN ALL LEVELS.

THEY'VE ALL *FAILED* ME.

ANY LEFT STILL ABLE TO DRAW BREATH--

DON'T DESERVE TO *LIVE.*

NEAR THE COAST OF KARACHI, PAKISTAN...

Calvin Rose, the escape artist and would-be assassin known as the **Talon,** and **Anya Volkova,** former member of the **League of Assassins,** had come here in search of Ra's al Ghul's **Lazarus Pits** in hopes that their legendary restorative properties could cure Talon's current **"undead"** state.

Now, one hundred and twenty feet below the surface of the ocean, Talon knew it was probably an inappropriate time and place for a **kiss.**

But, he also knew he still drew breaths of **air,** despite his body having no **need** for them.

This oxygenated air simply sat in his lungs, **unused.**

While **poisonous gas** filled the tunnels around them...

DEAD MAN'S PART 1

WRITTEN BY TIM SEELEY ART BY JORGE LUCAS
COLORS BY JEROMY COX LETTERS BY TAYLOR ESPOSITO
COVER BY EMANUEL SIMEONI & BRETT SMITH
EDITOR KATIE KUBERT GROUP EDITOR MARK DOYLE

...Anya Volkova was grateful Calvin still tended to forget he was, in fact, already quite dead.

Also, that he was a pretty damn good kisser.

Hmm?

HIYA! DO YOU SMELL IT?! THE SLIGHT GARLIC SCENT OF PHOSPHORUS?

LORD DEATH MAN DOES! BREATHE DEEPLY OF THE FLATULENCE OF OBLIVION! POOT POOT! THE REAPER FARTS FOR--

--YOUUU...

SPLASH

Uh-- SKULL GUY?

ANYA, YOU OKAY? CASEY, DO YOU COPY?

I'M HERE, CALVIN. I'M READING RAPIDLY DIMINISHING CHEMICAL AGENTS IN YOUR PERIMETER. SEVEN PERCENT, FOUR PERCENT...

Hnh hnh. Uck. YES, CASEY. FAST DISPERSAL, NOVICHOK. I...I CAN BREATHE THANKS TO CALVIN.

COME ON, WE HAVE TO KEEP MOVING...

MEANWHILE, IN THE LAB OF DR. DARRK...

INTRUDERS DETECTED WEST HATCH

Hrrm. TWO INVADERS IN MY TUNNEL. DID MY SUBJECT HAVE OUTSIDE HELP, PERHAPS?

CURIOUS. A--TALON?

"BEWARE THE COURT OF OWLS, THAT WATCHES ALL THE TIME, RULING GOTHAM FROM A SHADOWED PERCH, BEHIND GRANITE AND LIME..."

AN IMMORTAL ASSASSIN AT MY DOOR. IT MUST BE CHRISTMAS--

UH OH.

DELAYED OVERRIDE: PHOENIX DEFENSE INITIATED.

PHOENIX [redacted] INITIATED.

NOW WHAT?

FIRE STERILIZATION OF THE GROUNDS. WHATEVER IS GOING ON HERE, THE LEAGUE OF ASSASSINS IS TAKING IT VERY SERIOUSLY...

...IF I CAN GET IN THE LAB, CASEY, I CAN PERHAPS STOP IT--

LORD DEATH MAN

GOOD PLAN, ANYA. I'VE GOT INFO ON THIS LORD DEATH MAN GUY YOU RAN INTO...

...REAL NAME UNKNOWN. ABILITY TO RESURRECT FROM DEATH. WANTED BY THE UNITED STATES AND JAPAN...

GOT IT. OPEN SESAME.

...SUSPECT IN THE MURDER OF ALMOST THIRTY JAPANESE CITIZENS, INCLUDING BATMAN, INC. CANDIDATE MR. UNKNOWN. GOD, HE...HE BOMBED A BUS FULL OF KIDS.

WHAT?! MY GOD...

...HE CAN'T BE ALLOWED TO ESCAPE...

CALVIN, WE ARE LOOKING FOR A CURE FOR YOUR CONDITION. THIS DEATH MAN IS NOT PART OF THE MISSION.

SORRY, ANYA. RIGHT NOW, HE IS THE MISSION.

PIB BY BPT

LORD DEATH MAN! YOU'VE BEEN DEFEATED BY BATMAN AND A SEXY LADY IN A LEATHER CAT SUIT! SENT TO SPACE! CAPTURED BY A MAN WITH NO EYEBROWS...!

...AND WORST OF ALL, HAD YOUR BLOOD DRAINED AND SLURPED THROUGH A STRAW BY A GUY WITH TWO "Rs" IN HIS NAME! WHAT ARE YOU GONNA DO NOW?

WELL, LARRY, I'M GOING TO--

--CONQUER LIFE!

THAT GAME IS HARD. MY LITTLE *PINK WIFE* ALWAYS FALLS OUT OF THE CAR.

GRAH!

PINK WIFE!

HNH. WELL MET, BIRD CHEST!

WOK

HUNH!

BUT I'M GUESSING YOU AREN'T TOO USED TO USING THESE KNIFEYS TO *KILL*. STOPPED A LITTLE SHORT O' MY AORTA!

WHICH MEANS YOU AREN'T *LEAGUE OF ASSASSINS.*

BUT I THINK I KNOW WHO YOU *DO* WORK FOR, *SNEAKY CHICKEN!* AND I ONLY HAVE ONE QUESTION...

...WHAT IS THE *FAMOUS* RECIPE?!

SHANG

GHK! OOH! PRESSURE POINTS!

HOW ORIGINAL.

YOU'RE INSANE.

LABELS, MY BOY! THEY COME OFF WITH ORANGE OIL. WHAT YOU CALL INSANITY I CALL ENLIGHTENMENT.

CHING

NO FLESH CAN HOLD ME. BECAUSE SOONER OR LATER, I'M GONNA MEMORIZE ALL THE SECURITY CODES, AND THE SELF-DESTRUCT SEQUENCE.

EVERYTHING I'VE EVER LEARNED, I RETAIN. FROM THE DIM MAK TECHNIQUE...

...TO THE NAME OF EVERY SINGLE POKEMON.

AND THEIR EVOLVED FORMS!

I NEVER SLEEP, LITTLE TALON. MY BRAIN CELLS NEVER DIE.. I AM *TRUE AWARENESS.*

I AM THE *MURDER BUDDHA!*

SHUNK

NEVER ANYONE AROUND TO *RUB MY BELLY* WHEN I NEED THEM.

MEANWHILE...

...NOT HOW WE DO THINGS AT *SECURITAS,* ANYA!

CAN WE SAVE THIS FOR WHEN I STOP THIS BUILDING FROM *EXPLODING,* CASEY?

OH, WE'LL SAVE IT ALL RIGHT. YOU'RE JUST LUCKY I MADE SURE I CAN ACCESS ANY DEVICE THAT WE BUILD.

BECAUSE THE MOVEMENT DETECTOR APP I'M RUNNING ON THE *GPS* SAYS...

...YOU'VE GOT *COMPANY.*

BEHIND YOU!

ANYA VOLKOVA... ALL GROWN UP.

YOU'VE CERTAINLY CHANGED... *PHYSICALLY.*

OVERRIDE PHOENIX DESTRUCT SEQUENCE.

DNA REQUIRED.

TELL ME, HOW IS YOUR *MOTHER?* IS SHE ENJOYING THE HOME I GAVE HER IN OHIO?

THE ONE SHE *TRADED* FOR HER OWN DAUGHTER?

SQUIK

DNA ACCEPTED. PHOENIX DEFENSE DISCONTINUED.

NOW THAT THE VALUABLES ARE PROTECTED...

"...LET'S SEE IF WE CAN STOP ALL OF THIS FROM BEING A TOTAL *WASH, eh?*"

WEST HATCH OPEN.

WOOSH

MY MOTHER IS JUST FINE. PLAYS BINGO ON TUESDAYS. LOVES HER POMERANIAN, *PENNY*.

THEN SHE GOT THE *ESCAPE* SHE WANTED. AND WHAT DID I GET IN RETURN? A *DEFECTOR*, JUST LIKE HER.

DEFECTING. SELLING OUR SECRETS TO A SECOND-RATE *"PENGUIN."* YOU HAVE NO LOYALTY AND CARE ABOUT NOTHING BUT YOURSELF, JUST LIKE YOUR *MOTHER*.

I WONDER, WHAT WOULD IT TAKE FOR YOU TO RETURN TO ME, ANYA? WHAT *PRICE* WOULD I HAVE TO PAY TO SEND YOU TO *RETRIEVE* LORD DEATH MAN...AND YOUR FRIEND, THE TALON, FOR ME?

IN LITTLE BITTY *PIECES*, PREFERABLY.

OH, DR. DARRK... YOU CAN'T *AFFORD* ME.

SHUNK

SURF'S UP *DUUUUU--*

WEST HATCH CLOSE.

GIVE ME YOUR HAND, YOU SLIPPERY BASTARD.

GHK!

I KNEW THERE WAS SOMETHING I LIKED ABOUT YOU, DR. GOBBLOR!

=KOFF KOFF KOFF=

PLOOSH

YOU'VE BEEN TO THE *FAR BLACK SHORES!* YOU'RE A FELLOW CANOER ON THE *RIVER STYX!* YOU'VE GOT COOL GOGGLES!

Hrgh.

NOW, OL' DOC DARRK DOESN'T WANT US TO GET OUT, WHICH MEANS HE'LL FINISH FLOODING THIS TUNNEL IN NO TIME, DROWNING US A FEW TIMES OVER, AND THEN PLUCK UP OUR CORPSES.

YOU'RE ONE OF THE ONLY GUYS WHO CAN RELATE, SO, LET ME TELL YOU SOMETHING. SEE, ***BATMAN*** SENT ME INTO SPACE, RIGHT?

AND I'M OUT THERE, FLOATING AROUND THE EARTH, AND ALL I COULD THINK IS, "THERE'S NO ESCAPE FOR ME. THIS IS FOREVER."

THE IMPOSSIBLY LONG ***DARK-NESS.***

UNTIL THE EARTH DRIES UP AND BLOWS AWAY. UNTIL THE SUN GOES OUT. LEAVING ME IN THE DARKNESS.

NOW, NEITHER OF US HAS ANY WEAPONS LEFT, SO, WHAT I'M SUGGESTING IS, WE WORK ***TOGETHER*** AND GET OUT OF HERE BEFORE THE NEXT FLOOD COMES.

ME, I'LL GO ABOUT SPREADING THE WORD OF ***ZEN HOMICIDE***--

--AND YOU CAN GO GET PLUCKED AND MAKE A PILLOW OR WHATEVER.

WHAT'D YA SAY, ***GOLDEN DUCKY?***

THE NAME--

AAHH!

CHOMP

--IS TALON.

AND YOU'LL NEVER, *EVER* LEAVE THIS PLACE.

I HAD HEARD OF YOUR DEATH, DR. DARRK. AT THE HANDS OF THE DEMON HEAD'S *DAUGHTER*, NO?

WOK

I THINK I MAY HAVE *SMILED.*

AND NOW YOU SERVE THE *FATHER* OF YOUR MURDERER. I SMILE AGAIN.

KRAK

I AM...A *FLEXIBLE* MAN. AND IT'S BETTER TO BE A SERVANT IN HELL THAN A KING OF DIRT AND WORMS.

GAH!

FLOOKSH

ANYA! ARE YOU OKAY?!

I WAS WRONG. I SEE *YOU* HAVE TRADED ONE *MASTER* FOR ANOTHER, ANYA VOLKOVA. AND TO THINK, I JUST SPENT SOME OF MY *PRECIOUS BLOOD* ON YOU. WELL, *LORD DEATH MAN'S,* ANYWAY.

ANYA--

KRNCH

I TRADED SERVITUDE TO *SERVE.*

WHAM

HNGH.

NOW I HELP OTHERS ESCAPE...

FROM THOSE WHO CREATE ASSASSINS OF CIRCUS PERFORMERS LIKE THE *COURT OF OWLS.*

WEST HATCH OPEN.

THOSE WHO MAKE KILLERS OF LITTLE GIRLS LIKE THE *LEAGUE OF ASSASSINS.*

I HELP PEOPLE ESCAPE MEN LIKE *YOU,* EBENEZER DARCEL.

OH, ANYA. I'VE HEARD IT ALL SO MANY TIMES BEFORE. RUN, RUN ALL YOU LIKE. BUT YOU NEVER *ESCAPE...*

...WHAT YOU *ARE.*

AH. NYET.

PLBBLLPT!

PLBBLLLT!

Hehehe... AND WHEN I WOKE UP THIS MORNING, I THOUGHT I WAS IN FOR SUCH A BAD DAY, BUT IT'S BEEN QUITE INTERESTING...

NOT AS INTERESTING AS WHAT I *FOUND.* A DARK ROOM.

INFANTS IN GREEN GLOBES...

WH-- WHAT?

THE STRANGEST THING...

"...WHEN THE DESTRUCT-SEQUENCE WAS INITIATED, ALL THE DOORS *OPENED,* AND THERE IT WAS: A GARDEN OF BEAUTIFUL SLEEPING FACES.

"HIDDEN AWAY AS THEY WERE, SO SECURE AND PEACEFUL, WELL, NATURALLY I ASSUMED THEY WERE QUITE *IMPORTANT,* YES?

"BODIES FOR *AL GHUL THE IMMORTAL,* PERHAPS? YES. VERY IMPORTANT.

"SO I ATTACHED A *BOMB* TO THEM."

KILL ME, AND I LET LOOSE THIS *TRIGGER.*

YOU WOULDN'T. THEY'RE JUST INNOCENT *CHILDREN...*

AS WAS *I* WHEN YOU DESTROYED ME. BESIDES, I'M NOT SURE I BELIEVE BLANK RECEPTACLES FOR THE DEMON HEAD'S *SOUL* ARE "INNOCENT CHILDREN."

EITHER WAY, IT IS LIKE YOU SAID, I CANNOT ESCAPE WHAT I *AM.*

"BUT THERE ARE THOSE WHO CAN. *THE TALON* IS ONE OF THEM.

"HE TURNED HIS BACK ON THE COURT OF OWLS. HAS FOUGHT THEM TO THE DEATH AND *BEYOND.*

"TRAINED AS AN ASSASSIN, HE WOULD NOW RISK IT ALL TO SAVE THE INNOCENT. HE IS AN EXAMPLE. A *SYMBOL.*

"I WOULD DO *ANYTHING* FOR THAT SYMBOL."

ANYTHING.

Sigh I ADMIT TO BEING QUITE PROUD AT THE MOMENT. YOU ARE AS CRUEL AND MERCILESS AS EVER. NOW...

WEST HATCH CLOSE.

"...YOUR FRIEND AND LORD DEATH MAN ARE TRAPPED IN A *HELL* OF *EVER-DROWNING DARKNESS.* BUT, I WILL MAKE YOU A *DEAL* FOR THE CHILDREN.

"WHAT IS IT YOU *WANT* FOR THIS *TALON* AND HIS LIFE?"

LATER.
GOTHAM CITY...

LEXCORP SECURITY BUILDING--GOTHAM BRANCH.
OUT OF BUSINESS.

ANOTHER LOVELY NIGHT FOR A *MURDER.*

SHH, ANYA. SARAH'S HERE.

HGUK!

BURNING ROPE SUSPENDED COFFIN ESCAPE-- TAKE TWO.

C'MON, BABIES. POP FOR POPPA.

TA-DA. THANK YOU, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN.

AND, JUST LIKE THAT, YOU'RE BACK TO *ESCAPING.*

I DO HAVE TO SAY, AT LEAST YOU'RE A PRETTIER *COLOR* THIS TIME AROUND.

Heh. THANKS. ACTUALLY, I THINK I'M *DONE* ESCAPING FOR A WHILE. THINKING ABOUT SPENDING A LITTLE MORE TIME *LIVING.*

MOMMY... *OWL.*

Shh, SARAH. IT'S OKAY.

WHAT'S WRONG?

SHE'S STILL A LITTLE... *TRAUMATIZED* BY THE UNIFORM.

OH.

CASEY, WE'VE GOT A CALL! A WOMAN TRYING TO GET OUT OF *INTERGANG...*

INTERGANG. *Hm.* VERY DANGEROUS. ALIEN WEAPONRY.

EDGAR AND *JOEY* ARE ON THEIR WAY. WE'RE GOING TO NEED YOUR SKILL SET, CALVIN.

FEELING UP TO IT?

Calvin Rose, the escape artist who had become the Talon, had pulled off his greatest escape.

From immortality. From the impossibly long darkness.

YEAH, MORE THAN ANYTHING.

I'M FREE.

He drew a breath, not out of habit, but out of **need**. He was alive. Gloriously **alive**.

Where once he had been alone, afraid of his own past--

--he was now surrounded by friends. Allies. **Family**.

And they were never far behind.

They would fight with him. Guard his back.

Make a deal with the devil for him.

MY SUBJECT IS PROPERLY SECURED, DARRK?

HMM! HNHHH!

YES. I BELIEVE HE'LL FIND IT MORE DIFFICULT TO ESCAPE--

MHH! HMNH!

--FROM A *CEMENT* TOMB.

AND MY *SHELLEY* FORMULA?

EXTRACTION AND CONVERSION WILL PROCEED IMMEDIATELY.

NO MORE FAILURES, DARRK. REMEMBER, YOUR EXISTENCE DEPENDS ON YOUR SUCCESS. DO NOT TEST MY PATIENCE FURTHER.

OH, BUT DEAR DEMON'S HEAD...

...I HAVE ALL THE TIME IN THE WORLD...

THE END?

Talon #1 variant cover by **TREVOR McCARTHY**

Talon #2 variant cover by
KEN LASHLEY and TOMEU MOREY

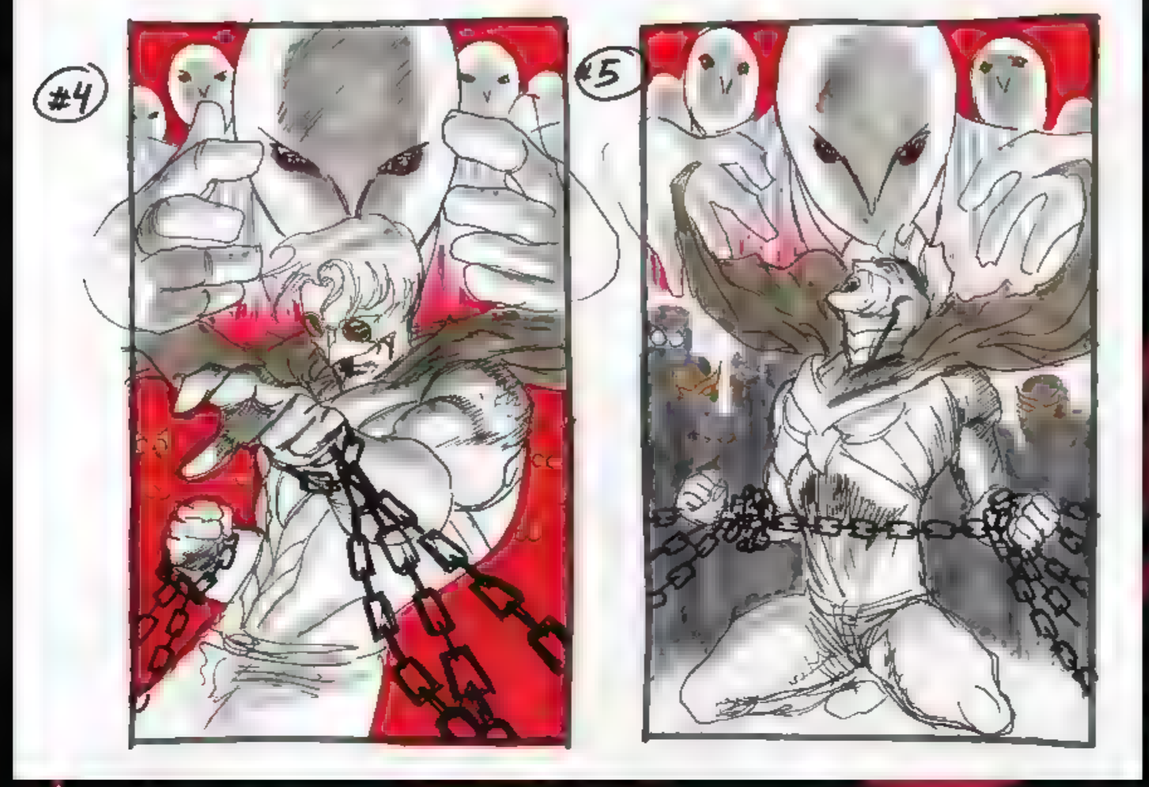
Talon #3 variant cover by **ANDY CLARKE** and **TOMEU MOREY**

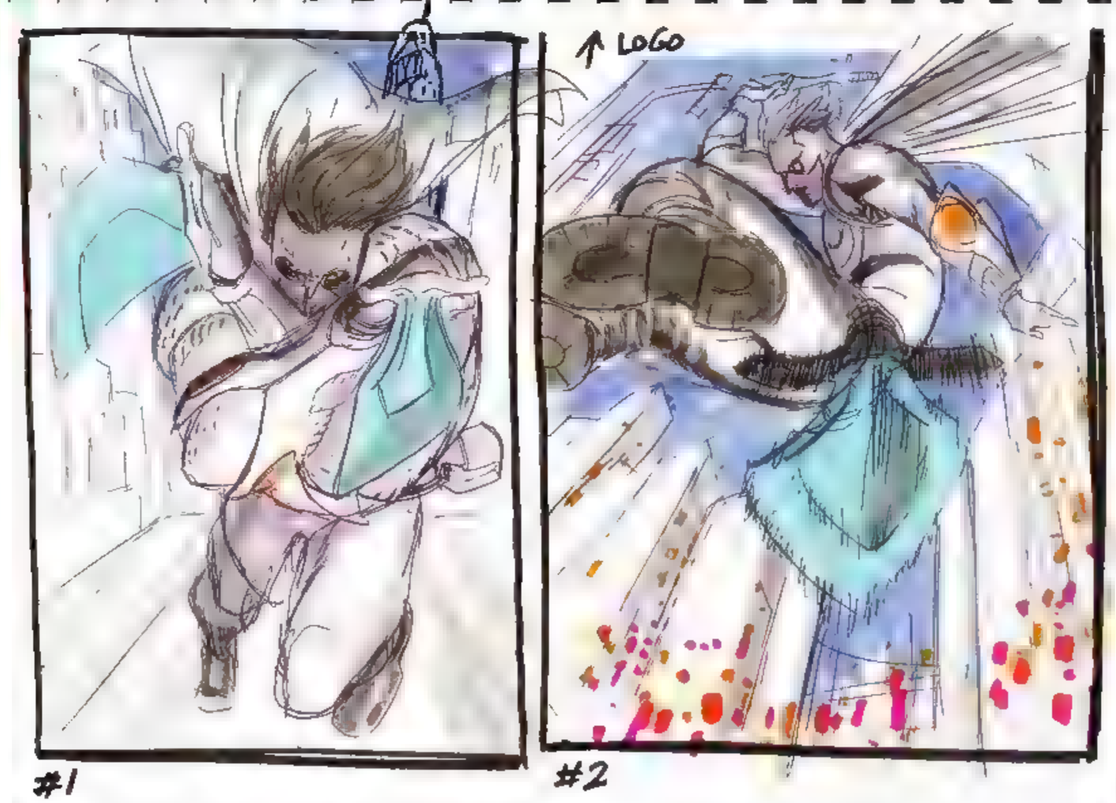
Talon #4 variant cover by MIKE CHOI

Talon #5 variant cover by **BILLY TUCCI** and **HI-FI**

Venom #7 wraparound cover by GUILLEM MARCH and TOMEU MOREY

Talon sketches by GUILLEM MARCH





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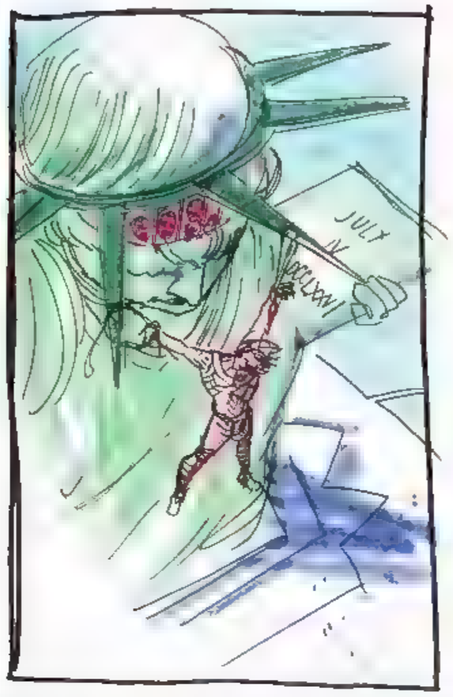

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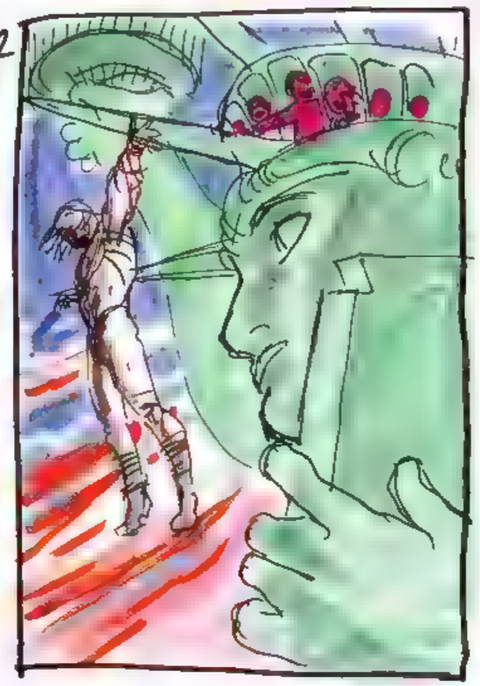

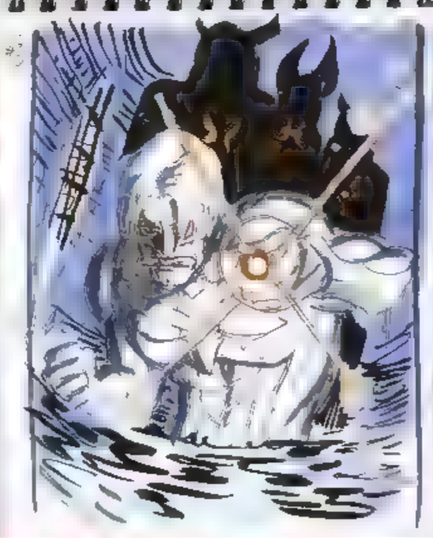

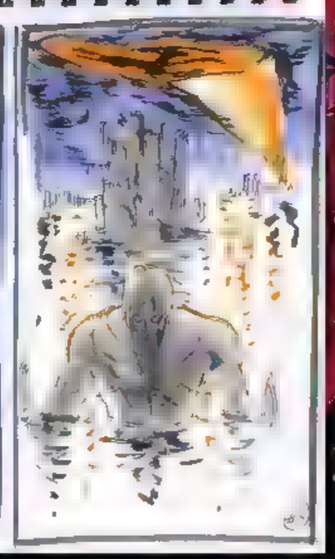

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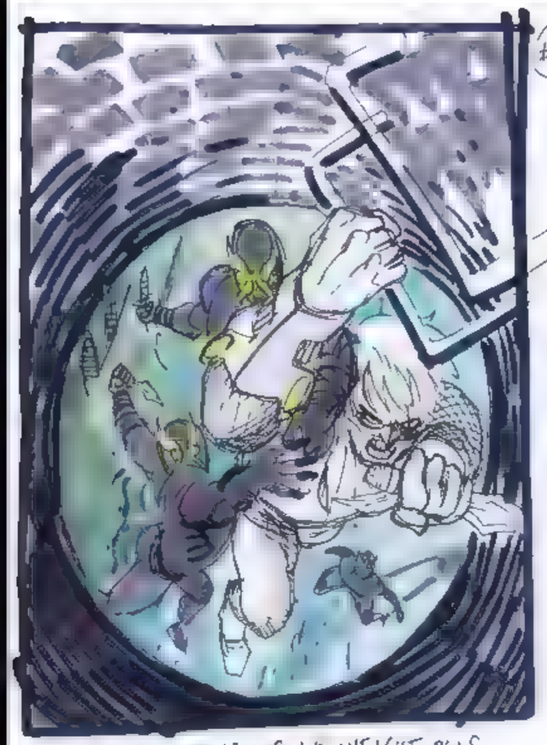

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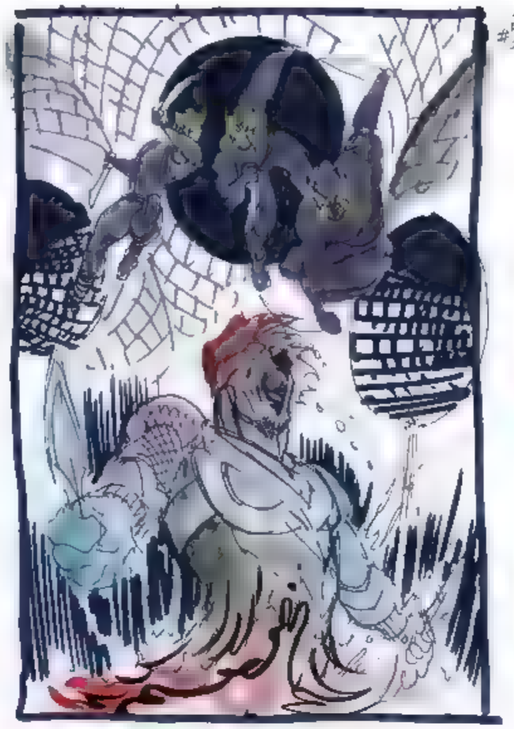
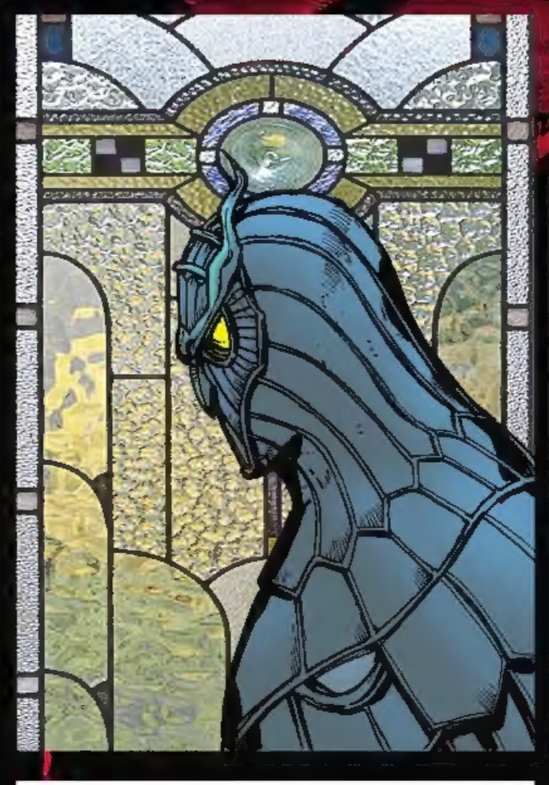


• CALVIN IS LIFTING HIS OWN WEIGHT PLUS TWO OTHER TALONS ATACHED TO HIM.

TRYING TO ESCAPE THROUGH A TUNNEL IN THE CEILING

Talon cover sketches and character studies by
MIGUEL SEPULVEDA

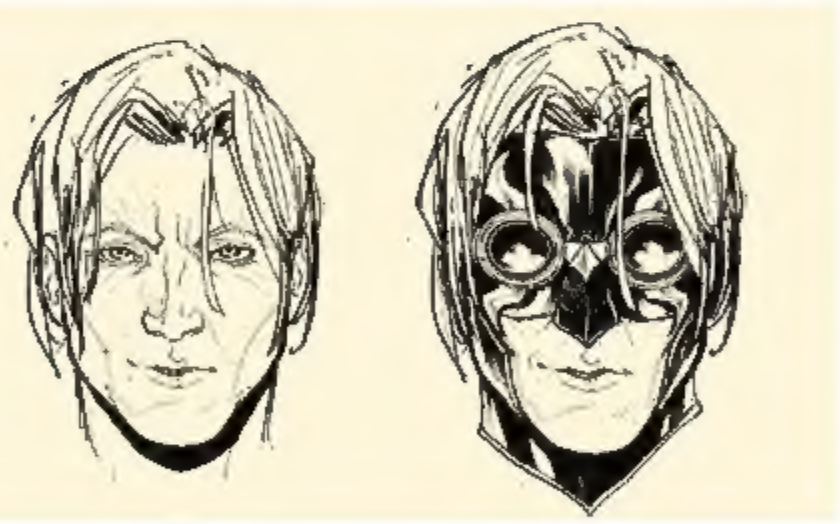
FELIX HARMON
v.23
MARCH '12
CHAINS LOOSE ENOUGH SO DON'T LIMIT HIS MOVS.
• HIDDEN FACE → CREEP
• CHAINS : HE WAS A CIRCUS SCAPIST THAT USED STRENGTH INSTEAD OF ABILITY ?
CALVIN'S NEMESIS
• OWL EYES



Talon character studies by
EMANUEL SIMEONI

BANE

Calvin Rose



Emanuel Simeoni

The Hunter versus The Hunted

As a young performer with Haly's Circus, Calvin Rose was secretly being raised to be a mighty assassin—a killing machine called a Talon. The Talons have always served the mysterious Court of Owls, a group of wealthy individuals who will stop at nothing to maintain their grip on power in Gotham City. When Rose defects from the Talons' ranks, he is marked for death and spends the next few years using all of his training to hide from his former masters. After years on the run, Rose finally returns to Gotham City following the horrors of "The Night of Owls." He sets off to investigate what remains of the Court of Owls, but will he be able to gain his freedom at long last?

This collection includes some of the earliest Gotham City tales from current Batman scribe **James Tynion IV**, and his collaborator on *The Joker*, **Guillem March**—springing forward from **Scott Snyder** and **Greg Capullo**'s instant-classic Batman story, "The Court of Owls"!

Collects *Talon* #0-17 and *Birds of Prey* #21 and features a brand-new introduction from Tynion.

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